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The Domestic Violence Act: Ghana's Bright Future

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The Domestic Violence Act: Ghana's Bright Future

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Thesis

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School

Of the University of Texas at Austin

in Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

The University of Texas at Austin

December 2012

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My deepest thanks go out to my parents, Bruce and Sandy Morris, for their unwavering support and understanding during the many hours (okay, years) I dedicated to achieving this milestone in my life and career. I would not have been able to finish without their constant financial and emotional support, encouragement, and love. I would also like to thank my advisors, Lynn Westbrook and Noel Busch-Armendariz. Both women were inspirations from the moment I met them, for the work they do and for the women they are. Their support and feedback were invaluable. I am grateful to Chris Taylor, my old roommate and friend, for yelling at me (in a nice way) and forcing me to meet him at the library everyday until my paper was done. Gratitude must also be paid to Larissa Swindle, my best friend for over 10 years, who always let me bounce ideas off of her, was up for editing at any time, wasn't surprised at all when I called her from Ghana to tell her I had been proposed to by a Prince, and who continues to be the best friend any girl could have. And finally, I would like to give special thanks to the men and women who work tirelessly to eradicate gender based violence in Ghana and throughout the world, many of whom without which I would not have been able to achieve this goal.

The Domestic Violence Act: Ghana's Bright Future

by

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2012

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The Domestic Violence Act was passed in Ghana in 2007 marking a shift in the legal recourse available to survivors of intimate partner violence. The goal of my research is to identify the social, cultural, and legal changes that have occurred in Accra, Ghana and the surrounding areas since the passage of the DV Act. While in Ghana I spoke with men and women who were involved in the struggle to get the bill passed, as well as NGO employees and government officials who have seen men and women utilize the legal rights that the bill provides. I wanted to learn as much as I could about the cultural complexities of Ghana that continue to make the eradication of intimate partner violence so difficult. In the end, I hope that my research will add to a growing understanding of what is most lacking in the fight to attenuate the deleterious effects of intimate partner violence, so that advocates will be better able to truly implement the DVA's emancipatory qualities. I also hope that the study will be a catalyst to promote continued education and invigorate activism. Methodologically, I used qualitative research tenets, utilizing in depth interviews and emergent coding. Results show how socio-culturally informed gendered attitudes and norms heavily impact the implementation of and enforcement of legal frameworks within communities. Findings also aid in a better understanding of the factors that surround violence against women in Ghana, and help explain how such factors are interrelated and mutually reinforcing.

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SECTION ONE

Introduction

Violence against women and girls is a problem of vast proportions. Up to 70% of women around the world have been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in their lifetime (UNIFEM, 2011, n.p.). These numbers paint a dire picture for women worldwide, for the continued economic and social development of societies, and for the health of at least half of the world's population. However, receiving support mandated by a legal system that formally condemns violence against women does not necessarily translate to the eradication or even the diminishment of that violence.

Some formal laws and cultural norms in Ghana actually contribute to violence. As Heidi Boas notes in her paper entitled, *Lessons from Ghana: The Challenges of a Legal Response to Domestic Violence in Africa*, “customary law in Africa—which operates largely apart from, and sometimes in addition to Western-style legal systems often treats women as subordinate to men” (2006, p. 3). Even with the implementation of formal laws making intimate partner violence illegal in Africa, and specifically in Ghana in the form of the Domestic Violence Act in 2007, cultural attitudes that promote the idea that women are lesser than men have not substantially shifted. Laws such as the exclusion of women from the shared ownership of marital property or land, as well as cultural norms such as the payment of a bride price by Ghanaian men, promote the idea that women are the

property of their husbands (Boas, 2006, p. 3-4). These laws and norms in turn support the “notion that a husband has the right to discipline his wife using corporal punishment” (Boas, 2006, p. 4).

Given the prevalence of intimate partner violence in Ghana,¹ my research was predicated on the fact that unraveling some of the cultural complexities and nuances that continue to make the eradication of intimate partner violence so difficult could potentially aid men and women in their unwavering efforts to educate citizens and in their push for equality for all women. Central to that work is my analysis of the Domestic Violence Act’s (2007) impact, particularly in its influence on shifting cultural norms in the three years since the Act was passed. Section Two of the study, contains a review of the literature on intimate partner violence in Ghana, as well as an overview of intimate partner violence and its context in Ghana. Section Three outlines the research methods and findings, and the study concludes in Section Four with implications of the study and suggestions for further research.

¹ Human Rights Watch conducted a national study in 2003 and found that 1 in 3 women had experienced physical abuse and 1 in 5 women had experienced psychological abuse.

SECTION TWO

Literature Review

From a Gender Institute put on by the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), came several papers that address issues relevant to combating violence against women, and specifically to this study. Research produced several emergent themes: attitudes of male dominance and patriarchy in Ghana (Abane, 2003), gender roles within Ghanaian society (Ampofo, 1993), and gender roles within marriage (Abane, 2003). The formation and reinforcement of specific notions of masculinity and femininity play a huge role in the prevalence of violence against women in Ghana. Women's constraints due to social, cultural and economic barriers as well as women's perceptions of themselves within Ghanaian society including the family, work place, educational system, and political arena also negatively affect the push for gender equality (Greenstreet, 1975, Amoakohene, 2004). Corruption in the courts and legal systems (Boas, 2006), as well as socio-spatial conditions (e.g. compound homes and lower-class neighborhoods), foster abuse in Accra (Appiahene-Gyamfi, 2007). Although violence against women is a health concern (Lithur, 2003), women possess agency and utilize it through formal and informal channels (Green 1999).

The challenges to combating intimate partner violence include nascent legal responses within Africa as a whole and within Ghana in particular (Boas, 2006).

Nevertheless, Ghana's recent legislative and socially-rooted support movements stand as a model for other nations (Boas, 2006). The non-profit organization, The Women's Initiative for Self-Empowerment (WISE), funds one of the only two shelters in Ghana, and focuses on counseling and support services for women and children who have survived intimate partner violence. During 2003 and 2004 Heidi Boas, a law student at Berkley University, spent eight months in Ghana volunteering with WISE. Her work emphasized the value of community-centered social engagement, advocacy and cultural sensitivity training (Boas, 2006, p. 19).

Each of the aforementioned papers and articles contributes greatly to the discussion surrounding gender equality and violence against women in Ghana. However, as of 2009 there seems to be a lack of research about any changes that have occurred in Ghana since the passage of the DVA; my study aimed to address those gaps. My data analysis and the literature review's section on the Socio-Historical Context of Violence Against Women are informed by the book, The Architecture of Violence Against Women in Ghana, and based on the ways in which emerging concepts from my interviews interact with the comprehensive analysis of specific themes related to violence in Ghana. The book was published in December of 2009 and was obtained in Ghana in January 2010, after my data collection but before my data analysis. Kathy Cusack and Takyiwaa Manuh edited the anthology of essays written specifically for the book by eleven researchers, lecturers, and professors, all experts in their respective fields. For each essay, authors used data collected in a nationwide study done by The Gender Studies and Human Rights

Documentation Centre in 1999 to determine the prevalence of intimate partner violence in Ghana.

In order to better understand the people with whom I spoke while in Ghana, I needed a basic grounding in general Ghanaian frameworks regarding women and violence. More specifically, I needed to understand how the historical background of violence against women in Ghana affects the current day situation in which activists find themselves. The section below aims to address that background. Although the section seems bleak, I would like to point out that there are many wonderful cultural traditions in Ghana, as well as loving couples and non-violent, respectful men. My research, however, focuses on gender based violence and inequality, and as such I was not able to include examples of the numerous positive aspects of the culture.

A Socio-Historical Context of Violence Against Women in Ghana

Many ethnic groups inhabited what is modern day Ghana beginning around 1200 AD. The Portuguese began arriving in the 1400s, drawn to the area to trade in gold, ivory, and slaves. The Portuguese were joined by the Dutch, British, Swedish, Danish, and Spanish between the 1500s and 1600s and built as many as thirty trading forts and slave dungeons. It is estimated that a third of the population were indentured servants before Europeans arrived and that in between the 1500s and 1800s 9.4 to 12 million Africans were sold into slavery and transported across the

Atlantic Ocean to North and South America. At the same time, the Empire of Ashanti, whose government operated out of what is now Kumasi, was the largest and one of the most influential states in sub-Saharan Africa. Once the Dutch left in 1847, the British began their conquest for power, which was solidified in 1896. They remained the colonial power until Ghana declared its independence in 1957.

Ghana has close to 24 million people, the majority of whom reside in Accra, the capital city, and Kumasi. Its government is stable and democratically elected, with a pluralistic judicial system based on the British system, known as common law, as well as on a Ghanaian parliamentary system, and on traditional or customary law (Manuh, 2009, p. 39). Ghana is split into three different ecological zones. The northern region consists of grasslands, the central region is mostly forest, and the southern region has coastal vegetation. The northern region is known for farming, but its “single rainfall farming season” limits its productivity. The central zone supports year round cultivation of some crops, and the southern region can support livestock and some grains (Manuh, 2009, p. 38). The economy relies on agriculture as well as exports such as gold, cocoa, timber, and electricity, and on international assistance from the World Bank, but overall, the economic situation in Ghana has been dire for almost 30 years.

So, how does this history affect gender relations in modern day Ghana? The remnants of colonialism, Ghana’s reliance on farming and international assistance programs, Ghana’s governmental and judiciary structures, and traditional customs and laws all play different roles in the perpetuation of gender inequity in the

country. Furthermore, Ghana's financial situation has created an economic atmosphere that makes funding significant social reform extremely difficult. The following paragraphs describe how the history of Ghana affects gender relations and violence in the present.

Prevalence of Violence

Violence against women and children is pervasive in Ghana and manifests itself in many forms including: physical violence, psychological violence, economic violence, and violence by the state. One of every two women has experienced some form of violence from a male partner, and as many as 75% of the overall population experienced violence as a child (Cusack, 2009, p. 1). There are also reports of acid throwing, body parts being burned, limbs being cut off, wives and lovers being murdered, gang rapes, public humiliations, stalking, forced isolation, female genital mutilation, early, child, and forced marriage, forced prostitution, degrading cultural practices, accusations of witchcraft, and sexual slavery (Cusack, 2009, p. 1-2). "The individual men who commit murder, rape and battery of women in Ghana, are generally not deviants acting out some pathology" (Cusack, 2009, p.11). Violence is the norm. So, what are the factors that contribute to violence as a norm? A more in depth view of Ghana's social, economic, and religious structures as well as the role of the state and the media, issues of poverty, health, authoritarianism, marriage and family, parenting, and cultural roles will help shed some light.

Poverty

Although Ghana is a relatively stable country, there are more people in Ghana living in conditions of poverty than not, with over one in five living in extreme poverty. In real numbers, this means that over six million people in the country struggle everyday with conditions of economic hardship (Cusack, 2009, p. 13). Forty-two percent of the population is without clean drinking water, 70% lack health services, and 68% are without sanitation (Manuh, 2009, p.43). Maternal and infant mortality rates are high, malnutrition is rampant, and migration from poor rural areas to urban areas causes crowding and raises the risk of violence.

Although poverty cannot be isolated as the only cause of violent behavior, it is most definitely a factor. Women who are poor are at a much higher risk for experiencing physical violence as compared to wealthier women who tend to suffer more psychological abuse (Cusack, 2009, p. 13). Violence does not occur only among the poor, and such a claim would somehow insinuate that poor men are inherently violent. However, when we look at the socialization, or cultural coding, of men and women in Ghana, there are some fundamental points worth noting in relation to poverty and violence.

Men in Ghana are socialized to be providers. They grow up with a sense of “entitlement to love, service and unrestrained sexual access” (Cusack, 2009, p. 15). Furthermore, men are taught that women are property, that they are inferior and unequal, and that women’s sexuality is suspicious and should be policed. Women,

on the other hand, are taught subservience and obedience; that men are superior to women. Both men and women grow up being told that heterosexuality, marriage, and bearing children are the only acceptable social norms (Cusack, 2009, p. 16).

Taking these gender norms into account, one can understand how poverty plays a role in violence and how different “understandings of masculinities and femininities act as scripts for violence” (Cusack, 2009, p. 16). When a man cannot provide for his family, his masculinity and status are called into question. Violence can often be a way of regaining a sense of control in the household and more so of a reclamation of the man himself. The differences in the socialization of men and women could help explain why there is not an increase in violence against men perpetrated by women when incidences of poverty for women rise.

Although economic violence affects both men and women in Ghana, women fare much worse than men. Akua Britwum and Kathy Cusack define economic violence as, “an intentional act of destruction of property, neglect of material needs and/or deprivation of rights to earn an income or to benefit from economic resources” (2009, p. 230). Ghanaian women produce 70% of the nation’s food crops, but are unable to own land or get credit, and are discouraged from participating in the formal sector as politicians or police, bankers or lawyers (Manuh, 2009, p. 47). When women do participate in the formal sector, men make more money than they do for the same work. It’s no wonder then that many women fall into the trap of economic dependence on their husbands and then feel as though they cannot leave an abusive relationship.

Ghana also participates in the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). As such it is “manacled to the international financial institutions by virtue of its need for and dependence on foreign aid and high levels of external debt. This dependency comes with severe controls and loss of autonomy. Policies are formulated in the international financial institutions outside the developing country of target,” and so cannot be held accountable (Britwum, Cusack, 2009, p. 237). These policies have undermined traditional employment for women by flooding markets with cheap imports like biscuits and textiles—traditional economic areas that women dominate, thereby pushing women out of the economic sector (Britwum, Cusack, 2009, p. 240).

Public Sphere Versus Private Sphere

Another factor contributing to violence against women and children is the strict separation between the public sphere and the private sphere. In Ghana, family life takes place in the private sphere where men are the heads of household. If violence occurs, many women do not report it because such things are to stay within the private sphere. Other family members may encourage this notion of silence as well. Although the state has had its say in matters of the family, such as marriage, divorce, child custody, and inheritance, it has a non-interventionist policy when it comes to abuse within the family (Cusack, 2009, p. 21). Women “have to deal with the instigation of terror by an all-powerful ‘sovereign’ (the man/patriarch); they are also compelled to turn for help to modern institutions such as medicine and

psychiatry, the police and courts. But these institutions often re-victimize battered women by pathologizing their condition and treating them as mentally unhealthy individuals; they are not deemed capable of forming legitimate appraisals of their situations and exercising rational agency over their lives” (Prah, Ampofo, 2009, p. 197).

Colonialism

Remnants of colonialism have also left their mark on gender relations in Ghana. Famous literary theorist, author, and cultural critic Edward Said explains that colonialism is more than just acquisition and accumulation, it is also supported by notions of domination, subordination, dependency, and inferiority (1994, p. 8). Colonization creates an atmosphere of ‘otherness’ where the colonized may eventually internalize a sense of alienation. During Ghana’s 113 years under British rule, “gender relations were a primary site for conscious intervention, manipulation, and restructuring” (Cusack, 2009, p. 19). Victorian notions of womanhood were held forth as examples of propriety and these notions had a profound effect on the self-perception of both men and women in Ghana. Even after independence, long periods of military rule and institutionalized state violence, more often than not perpetrated against women, were detrimental to citizens’ identities. In 1979 the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) government took power and approved and carried out the public flogging, humiliation, and rape of women in the Makola market place, a renowned market place and shopping district in the centre of Accra.

The accusations against the women were that they had been hoarding goods and making a profit during an economic hardship. Often women become the scape-goats for the economic ills of society (Adomako, 1993). When this horrific act took place, the public applauded, lending credence to the fact that women cannot be trusted and need to be controlled.

Religion

Religion in Ghana is pervasive and is another risk factor associated with violence against women and children. Most Ghanaian citizens practice Christianity, but about 16% of the population practice Islam. “Ideologies of hierarchy, male supremacy, dominance and inequality permeate religious doctrines, sermons, and practice” in Ghana (Cusack, 2009, p. 22). Religion teaches men to discipline their wives as a form of social control, and teaches women to be patient, tolerant, and forgiving (Cusack, 2009, p. 23). The dominant approach to counseling women living with violence is simply to avoid it (Oduyoye, 2009, p. 150).

Much of the basis for certain practices performed in the name of religion is derived from popular beliefs and taboos combined with a literal interpretation of Biblical scripture (Oduyoye, 2009, p. 140, 143). An increasingly popular belief in Ghana is that men who rape or abuse women are tempted by evil spirits. The irony is that the evil spirit is thought to live within the female victim. Sometimes she will be left alone for one to two months so that the devil within her will vanish. However, an exorcism in the name of God is just as often seen as a solution. Again,

the recipients of the exorcisms are often the victims, as they are the individuals responsible for tempting the men to hurt them (Oduyoye, 2009, p. 145).

Religious leaders and citizens misuse Bible verses and passages from the Qur'an and Sunna to justify the abuse of women and children for acts such as disobedience, flirting, correcting men's behavior, failing to make dinner or finish household chores on time, asking for school fees, and children misbehaving. As they are practiced, common Ghanaian religions also promote the idea that women's sexuality is sinful and should be controlled, that menstruating women should be isolated from the community, and that women should observe food taboos and fasting during pregnancy, which often causes harm to the mother and the baby (Oduyoye, 2009, p. 144).

Cultural Norms

There are also many cultural practices in Ghana that contribute to violence. Although "customary law has been made subservient to the Constitution...practice may differ from legal principles, and in reality, several derogations occur regularly" (Manuh, 2009, p. 36). There are some shaming rituals for men who defile minors or who beat their wives or children excessively and some rituals that gave women a measure of protection before the nuclearisation of the family, but the practices of female genital mutilation, early and forced marriage, and widowhood rites are common. Widowhood rites can include seclusion with the corpse, shaving one's head, cold baths for three weeks, bathing in the open for forty days, strict dress and

dietary restrictions, and having pepper thrust into one's eyes. Another common practice called "trokosi" is the ritual slavery of young girls to atone for the sins of family members (Ampofo, Prah, 2009, p. 99). In some parts of the country when young girls are viewed as being too proud, they may be subjected to a "gala" or gang rape to humiliate and subdue them, reinforcing the notion of victim blaming (Ampofo, Prah, 2009, p. 118). Many times when a married woman is raped, her rapist will compensate her husband with money, alcohol, or sheep, reinforcing ownership of the woman by her husband (Ampofo, Prah, 2009, p. 108). Sometimes, if the woman is single, she is made to marry her rapist (Senah, 2009, p. 302). This is entirely illegal, but it happens nonetheless.

Polygamy is a pervasive practice in Ghana and only women may be charged with adultery (Oduyoye, 2009, p. 146). Paying a bride price is also common and promotes the idea that women are the property of men and that they should be sexually available at anytime. This in turn makes the notion of marital rape conceptually impossible for many men and some women in Ghana, thereby leaving women at a higher risk for HIV/AIDS as they often cannot refuse sex or practice safe sex even with their husbands. Women lack a certain amount of autonomy over their bodies as men place themselves in charge of those bodies, where they go, how they dress, and how many children they have, and because divorce is abhorred in Ghana, many women stay in abusive relationships for fear of being publicly shamed.

"The call for an end to violence against women, and the call for gender equality in domestic and sexual relations" has often been labeled as an importation

of 'foreign' cultures into a supposedly harmonious Ghanaian culture (Ampofo, Prah, 2009, p. 94). During negotiations to get the DVA passed, the Minister of Women's and Children's Affairs continually stressed the need to be cautious about bringing in foreign values because it would "undermine Ghanaian cultural values of mutual respect and family harmony" (Ampofo, Prah, 2009, p. 94). The ongoing argument about notions of traditional values verses foreign values creates an added hurdle for activists working to promote equality.

The Media

Print and electronic media, which have grown significantly in past 20 years, is a two-edged tool in fighting violence against women. On one hand, media is "heightening public awareness of gender-based violence and reporting around it is part of the crucial context for anti-violence work" (Manuh, 2009, p. 41). On the other hand, it continues to under-report the violence and blame the victims (Gadzekpo, 2009, p. 270). Perhaps a female victim was insubordinate, threatened her husband with divorce, cheated, or dressed provocatively, and thus "deserved" to be beaten or raped. Perhaps a perpetrator had been drinking or was on drugs, stressed out, or was simply showing his love and affection for the victim in the form of jealousy. Often when a woman has been murdered, the media refer to the incident as a "tragedy" as though it were unavoidable, and refrain from naming the crime as a recurrent social ill or avoid ascribing blame to the perpetrator (Gadzekpo, 2009, p. 269, 274). Misleading and unclear words and definitions are often used, and stories

are described without any commentary, “providing little opportunity for contextualizing complex problems and encouraging the fragmentation of social problems, while producing a mere diary of the violence that a woman experiences” (Gadzekpo, 2009, p. 281). Graphic photos often accompany headlines about violence against women, further sensationalizing the incident. Reports of gender-based violence in Ghana are a double-edged sword whose potential to be an important crux of the elimination of violence against women is ambiguous at best.

Negative Health Implications

The World Bank estimates that worldwide, violence against women causes more damage than car accidents and malaria combined. Although there is little empirical data on the coping mechanisms and health seeking behaviors of women subjected to violence in Ghana, the negative health implications of that violence are immense and include physical wounds, depression, sleeplessness, paranoia, weight loss, weight gain, eating disorders, neurosis, alcoholism, multiple personality disorder, and cardiovascular disorder, and lack of confidence and self-worth (Senah, 2009, p. 298). One of the reasons for the absence of data reporting on the ways women cope and what mental and physical health options they might pursue, is the “private-public dichotomy of violence” that relegates violence against women to the private sphere (Senah, 2009, p. 288). It is also true that there tends to be a lack of skill or expertise within the healthcare industry about injuries that could be related to abuse, as well as vague ideas about what constitutes physical or psychological

violence. It is unclear whether these ideas stem from ignorance, a general lack of professional education, or a socially-embedded refusal to acknowledge that violence exists. Either way, even when women have the courage to treat violence as an offense to be dealt with in the public sphere by law enforcement and/or public health officials, they might face any number of setbacks in the process. Often women are re-victimized when they deal with police or physicians concerning violence.

Ghana's health infrastructure is based on three different sectors, which include the formal (national hospitals and private clinics), the quasi-formal (acupuncturists, homeopathy and herbalists), and informal (soothsayers, magicians, and miracle working prophets) (Senah, 2009, p. 290-293). Women's health choices are informed by their physical location, their income, and the severity of the issue(s) they're facing, and those factors directly relate to which health sector, if any, women will turn. To add to the difficulties, in the 1980s and 1990s the Ministry of Health and the World Bank instituted user-fees on medical care, often leaving women unable to pay for medical services they might desperately need (Senah, 2009, p. 302).

To further complicate issues surrounding violence and available health resources, often violence is committed to women's bodies via the culture's notions of reproduction. Abortion, access to birth control, unsafe birth control technology, the number of children a woman has, childcare, maternal death, the burden of responsibilities for reproduction, and motherhood "have all been instruments of

control over women's bodies, in some instances also placing real constraints on women's freedom of movement" (Senah, 2009, 289). This type of abuse is systematic and easily swept under the rug, couched in gender-normative and culturally-normative dialogues and attitudes. Mental health issues are also influenced by culture attitudes. Women who have mental health issues resulting from abuse are treated with suspicion and hostility. People often think they are afflicted because they are atoning for sins they have committed, or that their affliction is the result of a curse from a witch or wizard, or an ancestral spirit. Overall, the health care system in Ghana is failing to meet the needs of women who suffer from abuse.

Corporal Punishment

The educational system and family life in Ghana are two more primary sites for abuse, albeit the abuse of children. Although experts in the field agree that data indicates corporal punishment does not, in any consistent way, deter misbehavior or encourage good behavior on the part of children, corporal punishment within the home and schools is legal (UNICEF, 2000). The 1961 Education Act sanctions caning up to six strokes within the classroom. "Although human dignity is invoked as a guiding principal in all matters concerning discipline and punishment, and the law protects children from cruelty and unreasonable punishment, it remains vague and open to interpretation..." (Prah & Ampofo, 2009, p. 205). Children in Ghana are seen

as the property of their parents and guardians, and as such may be punished as deemed fit by their parents' and teachers' notions of propriety.

Focus groups conducted during the aforementioned nationwide survey done by the Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Centre in 1999, found that the overall attitudes about children in Ghana were that children are unruly, irrational, unreasonable, difficult, and temperamental (Prah, Ampofo, 2009, p. 213). In a culture that places such emphasis on blind obedience to authority, it goes without saying that those attitudes inform parents' and teachers' interactions with children. If you believe that children are innately difficult, you will approach them with disciplinary action in mind. Obviously, not all children are unruly, but even for children who are, the problem lies at the line between discipline/punishment and abuse/violence. Some measures used to correct poor behavior include starvation, insults, standing still in the sun, stooping for long periods of time, and placing ginger or pepper in girls' vaginas or children's anuses. These measures may be taken for a number of infractions, including refusing instructions, refusing chores or errands, stealing, being demanding, being stubborn, refusing homework, or coming home late (Prah, Ampofo, 2009, p. 214). Violence against children in Ghana within homes and schools must be a primary site for change if violence as a whole is to be addressed in a meaningful way.

Conclusion

The ways in which individual attitudes, notions of culturally accepted behavior, and state structures are mutually reinforcing are complex and nuanced.

Audrey Gadzekpo argues that:

Gender based-violence takes place and is supported at the personal level of individual consciousness and action, and the interpersonal level of relationships. But the family, culture, educational systems, religion, economic arrangements and the apparatus of the state, the structural foundations of social organization, are also complicit. Various, these structural foundations perpetuate hierarchal orders that exert power and control and reinforce violence at the private level of household and family and at the public level of employment and the state. (2009, p. 317)

The cultural climate in Ghana diminishes the autonomy of women and children, and although some minds and attitudes are changing, some institutions are responsive, and some legislation has been passed, the overall shift, implementation, and infrastructure to combat intimate partner violence and promote gender equity are still lacking.

SECTION THREE

Research Methods

The purpose of this phase of the study was to gain a greater understanding of the personal histories, attitudes, opinions, and theories of several men and women in Ghana who have been working to eradicate gender based violence. The interviews were also a way to situate these men and women within the larger context of violence in Ghana.

Data Gathering, Coding, and Emergent Themes

Recruitment

Three participants were chosen based on research into agency and non-profit websites. Five were interviewed at the recommendation of other interviewees. Participants for the interviews were recruited through three different methods. One potential participant from DOVVSU was sent a formal letter (see Appendix C). The letter informed her of the purpose of the research and inquired whether she or any other DOVVSU employees would be willing to be interviewed. Two potential participants were contacted by phone, told about the project, and asked whether or not they would like to set up a meeting. The third recruitment method was snowballing. After completion of each interview, I asked the interviewees if they knew of other people who might be willing participants in the

project, and that led to five additional participants. Those five participants were approached in person via the recommendation of other participants. All interviews were conducted in person, and all participants' names and/or names mentioned during the interviews have been altered and pseudonyms used to retain the privacy and confidentiality of each individual.

Participants

Interviews were conducted with two Ghanaian men and six Ghanaian women in eight offices in four different locales within Ghana. All participants interviewed were currently active within either a private organization working to serve women and/or children or within the public sector in Ghana. Each participant did work on intimate partner violence or work directly related to issues surrounding intimate partner violence. All participants were currently living in Accra, the capital city of Ghana, during the time of the interviews. One participant was hesitant to give her age, one offered hers, and six others were not asked, therefore I do not have accurate information about age range. Their appearance and experiences, however, indicate that two were probably under thirty, two were probably in their thirties, and at least four were old enough to have adult children.

Instrument and Interviews

The semi-structured interviews followed an interview guide (see Appendix B) derived from previous literature and the help of an advisor. Questions were shaped by a rich feminist history of collecting oral narratives, and chosen based on agency type and the specific person being interviewed. Although the interview questions guided the conversation between researcher and participant, the interview was semi-structured to allow modification based on what was deemed appropriate (cf. Robson, 2002). This allowed flexibility from both the researcher and participants to expand on issues of more relevance to them. I asked follow up questions and probe questions where necessary. The interviews were audio recorded on an iRiver recording device.

Limitations

The research was limited in its scope due to several factors. These include a limited amount of time in the country based on funding, interviewees' time constraints, bureaucratic red tape, and cultural logistics.

Data Management, Coding, and Findings

The audio recordings and later the transcriptions were all kept under physical and computer lock in my room in Ghana as well as in my home upon my return to the United States. The interviews were transcribed word for word by the researcher, and then coded according to emergent themes, with attention to themes at the individual and cultural

levels. Following the initial coding process (65 codes), codes were condensed into six clusters of themes (cf. Miles & Huberman, 1994). HyperRESEARCH qualitative data analysis software program was utilized to help organize the data and triangulate themes. Theme development was informed by an integrated framework that recognized the inherent interaction and dependency of individual and cultural variables. Emergent themes include: a lack of resources, funding, research, and expertise nationwide, the influence of powerful women's groups within and outside of Ghana, crippling cultural taboos as they relate to gender equity in Ghana, the need for education and sensitization, government ineptitude, and the challenges and triumphs of the individual activist.

Emergent Themes

Lack of Resources

Throughout the interviews the problem of a lack of funding, resources, research, and expertise within Ghana was raised more than any other theme. Although the interviewees placed more weight on different aspects of gaps and deficiencies and how those affected their specific organizations, the theme was prevalent throughout each interview.

When the Domestic Violence Act was passed in 2007, a Domestic Violence Management Board was set up to handle effective implementation of the law. The Act also allocated funds for the board, but as of yet very little of the money available has been disseminated. Most of the funding was or will be donated by other countries or organizations outside of Ghana, who support the Act and have an

interest in eradicating gender-based violence throughout the world. The lack of funding has as much to do with bureaucratic red tape as it does with the politics of patriarchy (see the government ineptitude section below), and has far reaching implications for the success of the DVA.

As of now, there are only two shelters in Ghana, a country with over 24 million people, and both are run by private institutions. The management board was tasked with building more, but has not broken ground on any. During a visit to the Domestic Violence Victims' Support Unit (DOVVSU), I noted that the waiting room was full and people waited in long lines stretching down several hallways and outside. One interviewee, Kwame, noted that employees at DOVVSU and the Department of Social Welfare are often so backed up with cases that they feel pressure to rush and find a solution to move people along. There is literally not enough space for people in the building. He said that, were DOVVSU and the Department of Social Welfare to have their own shelter, a space for women and children to wait or take refuge while their cases were being processed, employees would feel less pressure to make split second decisions, and thus serve victims' needs more effectively. Often, he stated, cases are closed without ever involving the courts. For employees, knowing that there are no shelters for women to take refuge in and that they will most likely return to an abusive situation, is difficult. Kwame's lament was shared by several other interviewees.

Creating positions within DOVVSU and the Department of Social Welfare is another challenge. One interviewee, Akosua, noted that she was supposed to have

36 more staff members, but without physical space to house them, she cannot fill the positions. She mentioned that because of the sensitive nature of intimate partner violence cases, there must be enough space to ensure the privacy of victims. Finding rooms is not the only issue, however; furniture and supplies like desks, chairs, computers, and phones are also required.

A lack of formal education or training further complicates the issue where space is available and positions are open. Abena, an employee of WISE, noted that there is a significant lack of counselors and clinical psychologists in Ghana. DOVVSU and the Department of Social Welfare do not have any clinical psychologists and WISE only has a handful. One can imagine what it might look like to staff shelters as they are built.

Kwame also pointed out that the police who work in the DOVVSU unit are not properly sensitized to issues surrounding intimate partner violence. Many are simply officers who went through general training and then were transferred to the department. Kwame stated that to work in DOVVSU, you must have “a certain kind of manner,” and the personnel, in his opinion, are “woefully, woefully bad.”

There is a need in Ghana for a coordinated, sustainable infrastructure to respond quickly and effectively to gender based violence. Akosua calls this notion a “one stop shop,” where all of the services and resources needed to address violence are on-site and in one place. She identified South Africa as an example of an African country that has successfully created this kind of resource, and her plan is to put structural systems into place that will outlive her. She dreams of a time when Ghana

will have “one stop shops” throughout the country. These sites would include counseling services and psychologists for adults and children, physicians to perform examinations, lawyers to provide legal counsel, a shelter to house those who need to escape a dangerous situation, and a court system with private rooms so that victims would not have to see the perpetrator if they did not wish to. Abena would also like to see a working 24-hour hotline where victims can call for advice or directions to the nearest shelter. There is currently a hotline through the ARK Foundation and one through WISE, but only one of those is 24 hours, and the other is spotty at best due to incessant troubles with Vodofone.

Juvenile justice is another area in which resources and expertise are lacking. As of yet, there is no system to help place abused children in shelters or residential treatment centers. Ghana does not have anything akin to Child Protective Services in the United States, and the termination of a parent’s right to care for a child is unheard of. If someone reports the abuse of a child to the Department of Social Welfare, the department will try to place the child with a relative. If no relative is available, the child will be sent back home. One of the reasons given for this is that disrupting a child’s schooling can have detrimental effects. Youths who run away from abusive situations often end up on the streets, hawking wares and paying older, stronger boys to protect them at night. Kwame has been doing his own research on youth violence and hopes to bring it to the attention of the government and develop a juvenile justice program.

Long term counseling in Ghana is very rare. Although an organization like WISE or the ARK Foundation might suggest that someone continue counseling for an extended period of time, the likelihood that the client will pursue long-term counseling is very small. There are any number of reasons for this: lack of money, time constraints, or pressure from friends, family or spouses to name a few. Abena noted that persuading a victim to commit to long-term counseling is a challenge. Recently, she has been attempting to persuade abusive men to accept counseling services. If a woman is sent to WISE or seeks out the organization herself, in some cases counselors will ask that her partner come in and talk with WISE acting as a mediator. Counselors will try to help the perpetrator understand why his partner has sought refuge with WISE or left to stay with a relative, and steps he can take to rectify the situation. One of those steps is counseling with WISE. Abena has seen some men accept the suggestions, but very few of them do. She also noted that even when men complete counseling and their spouses return home, it is difficult to keep track of the couple. Often the woman will say that everything at home is okay, but without further counseling it is impossible to know for sure. Her hope is that DOVVSU will develop a counseling center for perpetrators because, she claims, people are much more inclined to listen to and take the advice of the police than they are to listen to a non-profit organization. With highly trained and sensitized counselors, perpetrator counseling could be a huge boon to the eradication of gender-based violence.

Another challenge Ghana faces is a lack of research into specific areas and how they intersect with issues of gender, as well as a lack of research post the passage of the DVA to determine its effects. The latter might soon be addressed by the Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs (MOWAC). In an email exchange with an employee at the Gender Center, I was informed that the Center does not plan on conducting any research in the near future, but that MOWAC has hinted that a national study might be done. At this point it is difficult to tell whether incidents of violence have actually increased or whether more people are simply reporting abuse because there are now legal systems in place to address their grievances. The former issue is important for what it could illuminate about the way decisions are made within the economic and political sectors in relation to women. A female employee of Third World Network-Africa, Afua, noted that gender tends to be an "add-on" within some organizations and programs. She would like more empirical data in order to persuade people that women are badly affected when they are kept from participating in the economic and political sectors. More research is also needed to address violence against women outside of the domestic sphere, in order to persuade the government to implement laws against violence and sexual harassment in the workplace and elsewhere.

The main problem that victims in Ghana currently face, aside from the lack of resources and expertise, is the fragmented nature of the services that are available. Often victims are expected to travel to several different locations for services they might need. Many women cannot afford the travel expenses, some simply do not

have the time to commute to different parts of town, and others are re-traumatized by the experience of being shuffled around at their own expense after having suffered abuse.

Government Ineptitude

There has long been an argument over whether change happens more effectively when you address problems and work to fix them from the bottom up or the top down. The same argument exists in Ghana in relation to intimate partner violence. One participant, Kwaku, believes that affecting change from the bottom up is preferable. He has worked at the service provision level as a counselor and psychologist for many years and was involved in the coalition that worked to get the DVA passed. He argued that people who work at that level understand where the gaps in the system are and how to create a framework to address those gaps. Other interviewees believe that in order to affect change, the message about intimate partner violence needs to come from the highest levels of government.

Many of the bottom-up thinkers, derive their notions of government ineptitude from experience with a government that does not live up to its promises. Women's issues have long been relegated to the background within Ghanaian politics. Afua noted that Ghana needs a "political mind shift." It is extremely important that the Minister of Women's and Children's Affairs and the Minister of Justice maintain a good relationship with the different organizations working throughout Ghana to eradicate gender inequity and violence in the country, but

unfortunately, this has not always been the case. Contentious relationships have caused setbacks to the movement. Often, where relationships are good, bureaucratic red tape takes over to thwart progress. Abena noted that the red tape in disseminating money for specific tasks has been so bad that there are rumors that some in the donor community might withdraw their funding.

The pinnacle of government ineptitude came in January of 2010 when the President, John Atta Mills, held a press conference to address the current state of Ghana. When asked about building women's shelters in different regions, the President remarked that the government simply did not have the resources and that it was important to prioritize. In response to this statement, Abena remarked:

I couldn't believe I heard that. Can you imagine? This is somebody who, a couple of months back, was in New York, talking about the various things that Ghana is doing to address women's empowerment, which is true. This is a country that is so proud of the Domestic Violence Act, because we are one of the few countries on the continent who have passed it. In that Act, the government is obliged to set up a shelter in each district. And then, when we have a platform to address the issue, our answer is we don't have enough resources...what are our priorities? That was the biggest blow that you could ever give to anybody. When I think of the statement that the President made, I think it's ridiculous, and I think no donor should hear that.

She believes the comment stems from a mentality of deep seeded gender inequity. A statement from the president indicating that women's issues lack importance for the

government is a tremendous setback for gender equity in Ghana, and efforts should focus on addressing the president's comment and educating him and his administration on the magnitude of the problems that many women and children in Ghana face.

Cultural Norms

All of the participants in the study cited examples of cultural practices and traditions that work to prevent education on and usage of the DVA, as well as promote rigid notions of gender roles and parental control. Ghana is traditionally a very communal and family based society, so it is common for families to deal with conflicts internally rather than seek outside help. Some people are determined to prevent education on the DVA because they see it as in direct opposition to Ghana's traditional familial structure. Furthermore, the internalization of abuse has led some women to accept and even expect it. Over time, within a patriarchal, capitalist society, the internalization of norms of submission and abuse, leads to a belief that submission and abuse are normal parts of life. Those same women who have internalized abuse may prevent education on intimate partner violence because they believe that women belong in the domestic sphere and should be submissive to men. They will deny that marital rape exists and tell other women to stay with abusive partners.

Certain cultural attitudes in Ghana also encourage practices such as caning and female genital mutilation, and help uphold laws such as the one that bans

women from owning land. Although female genital mutilation is illegal, many women travel across the border to have it done. There is a certain amount of pressure placed on women to endure the procedure because failure to do so may label them the wrong kind of woman. Similarly, caning in schools has been banned for the most part, but many schools still practice it. Although some citizens in Ghana believe caning should be outlawed by the government, the phrase “spare the rod, spoil the child” is often invoked to justify its continuation. One interviewee, Kwame, related a story about a time he found a mark on his eight-year-old daughter. She was struck in class because she failed to answer a question correctly. He tried to speak with officials at the school, but they refused to admit that anything was wrong, and he eventually pulled his daughter from the school.

Another pervasive cultural norm is the shaming of women. Even with all of the strides that have been made over the past few years, women who report abuse are still sometimes re-traumatized by the system. They may be made to pay for their medical examinations, told they must travel to several different locations at their expense, or forced to meet with a perpetrator. Some have even been asked to provide money for officials to pick up the perpetrator. Stories of law enforcement officials, family members, and neighbors shaming women for reporting abuse and the additional insult of economic coercion are still common. Women are also still pushed out of the economic and political sectors through shaming. Even though there are many women currently in politics and working and contributing within the economic sector in Ghana, women still face discrimination in those fields.

Education and Sensitization

“Education and sensitization are critical...education, education, education!” exclaimed Akosua during an interview at DOVVSU. She was the first to say it, but her sentiment was echoed throughout the interviews. Educated women are more likely to know about the passage of the DVA and utilize its safeguards. It is less probable that women in rural areas or illiterate women will know about the DVA or, more broadly, about their rights as Ghanaian citizens. It is important for pertinent information to be translated into different languages and disseminated to rural villages. There are still many people in Ghana who believe that the existence of human rights or women’s rights is another facet of imperialism, and in order for those attitudes to shift, it is important for women’s groups to continue movement building in the form of education. Afua, from Third World Network-Africa, claims that in order to educate the public on women’s issues, it’s important to point out the interconnectedness of women’s issues as they relate to education, economics, politics, and financial institutions. People must see the ways in which current events domestically and around the world relate to women in Ghana. Afua used the example of the financial crisis beginning in 2008 in the West. Most people, including members of the government, did not pay much attention to the crisis because it was seen as a Western issue. However, Ghana’s banks and institutions as well as development in Ghana were affected. In order for cultural attitudes to shift, and for all women in Ghana to have a chance to utilize the DVA’s safeguards and their rights

as Ghanaian citizens, education must be made a top priority for women's groups and the government.

Influence of Women's Groups

All of the participants who were interviewed believe that the DVA as well as the work done by other organizations has influenced a psychic shift in the way people think about women. Even if the shift is not yet quantifiable, interviewees noted that women are more accepted overall, and can be seen asserting themselves in the public sphere. More women know about their rights and can assert them. More conversations about gender within politics and economics and gender and violence are taking place. DOVVSU is now a household name and intimate partner violence is no longer simply seen as a family issue. Neighbors are now reporting incidents of violence on behalf of their neighbors, something that was unheard of several years ago. Men are also reporting abuse to DOVVSU and the Department of Social Welfare when they feel their children are being neglected. Ghana is proud to be one of the few African countries to pass domestic violence legislation, and much of the groundwork for the passage of the Act was laid by powerful women's groups working within and outside of Ghana.

Some of the participants of the study work for organizations that have been in existence for years. Many of these organizations pushed for the passage of the DVA and continue to work for gender equity in Ghana. The Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Center was responsible for the national study in 1999

that highlighted the prevalence of intimate partner violence in Ghana and demonstrated that interventions were necessary. Since then, heightened advocacy surrounding the passage of the Act has led to an increase in the number of reports of violence. One interviewee, Abena, noted that legal recourse is empowering and allows victims to report abuse without the fear that no action will be taken. The Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Center has also produced a 145-page training manual intended for individuals and organizations to ensure a comprehensive understanding of violence against women. Workshops are being organized in Accra and throughout the country by different groups in order to educate citizens on the Act. Many women's groups, including WISE, worked tirelessly to repeal the Marital Rape Clause within the DVA. The clause allowed for the use of force within marriage, and the Act had to be passed without the repeal of the clause because it was such a contentious issue. Powerful women's groups will continue to insist that gender be an integral part of the decision making process in all facets of Ghanaian life, and will continue to make their voices heard.

Challenges and Triumphs of Activists

Dedicating your life and career to pursuing gender equity and eliminating violence against women and children is an extremely noble and demanding task. The need for self-care for individuals doing this work is high. One interviewee, Kwame, said of his job, "So much stress working here. Oh, boy. So much stress. From the time you get up, you have calls. This person is calling for this and that. You

come and sit here, and there is no good news. It is all bad news from morning to evening. And you just get to go have a small sleep and come back.” Other interviewees noted that your weekends and sleep often get sacrificed to the work, and it is easy to feel depressed about the state of affairs you find yourself in. But the same people who spoke of the demands of the job, also described their desire to continue dedicating their lives to the cause. They spoke of obstacles overcome, triumphs in their everyday lives, and what motivates them to push on even when the odds are stacked against them.

Akua believes that although the work is challenging, “the challenge always builds you up.” Another participant, Abena, spoke of the drive she felt, even as a little girl, to pursue women’s empowerment:

I kind of have believed in women’s empowerment forever. I would fight the guys for thinking that there were things that they could do because they were men. And I could not do. So, I would climb in the trees with them, I played football with them, you know, those kind of things. And so, I knew that I had something. I think it comes as a natural thing, where you don’t think you would allow a guy to have their way just because they feel like they are guys. Give me reason. You know? If you can do it, using two hands, I have two hands, why? And then also, I knew that I had a heart to save the vulnerable, as it were. Because, as I was growing up, one of the things that I used to say was, when I grow up, I pray that God gives me a lot of money. I will buy a bag

of slippers, and then, when I walk the streets, if I see any child without her shoes, I will give them to her.

Abena went on to do work outside of the field of women's empowerment, but then returned to it years later. She said, "Where your heart is, you always come back." She prides herself on having an open door policy for her employees. Her office is always unlocked and she encourages employees to come and talk with her about their concerns or challenges as well as their celebrations. "I have encouraged them. We are all about women's empowerment. Most of us here are women. If I cannot help empower you, how can I imagine I am going to empower an outsider? Charity begins at home."

Other interviewees spoke of the challenges they face and how they maintain the mentality to overcome them. When the President made the comment about a lack of resources, it was a severe blow for many of the men and women who worked so hard to get the DVA passed and who continue to work to implement its provisions. One interviewee, Akua, said, "We are not deterred, we will still fight, you know. We are still on it. We are trying hard." And another, Abena, noted, "Sometimes it depends on the way you look at the glass, half full, half empty, you know? Maybe, half full, is where we can look at it. Okay, this is giving us a point to engage the President. This is giving us an advocacy tool. Because, you know, sometimes you get complacent, get to thinking, oh, yea, they are trying, they're doing everything they can. But, when you get a statement like this, then you sit up. And you say, well, we have a lot more work to do than we imagined." Another

gentleman, Kwame, spoke of days of feeling defeated and how he managed to carry on. Kwame said, You know what, there may not necessarily be a financial reward. But meeting someone on the street, who is coming to hug you. 'Don't you remember me?' I said, 'No.' 'Oh, you listened to me. You helped. You don't remember me?' I said, 'No.' 'Well, you did this for me, you did this for me. If it were not because of you, this, this, this would not have happened.' I said, 'Well, I can't remember. But thank God you're okay.'"

SECTION FOUR

Implications and Suggestions for Further Research

Implications

My research sought to understand some of the cultural complexities within Ghana that continue to make the eradication of intimate partner violence so difficult, as well as to identify the changes that have occurred in Accra, Ghana and the surrounding areas since the passage of the Domestic Violence Act in 2007. My hope was that the research would add to a growing understanding of more effective ways to implement the DVA's emancipatory qualities, and as such my focus was primarily on the DVA and its effects. Results of the study, however, outline how socio-culturally informed gendered attitudes and norms heavily impact the implementation of and enforcement of legal frameworks within communities.

Even with a legal framework in place, cultural attitudes often prevent the utilization of the law by women who need it the most. This is not to minimize the importance of laws. Inconsistencies in enforcing laws only embolden perpetrators. However, violence takes place at the personal level and is supported by family, culture, educational systems, religion, and economic arrangements. In order to effectively address violence against women in Ghana, specific risk factors need to be addressed, and socially constructed concepts of masculinity and femininity reexamined.

Although not all men in Ghana are abusive, it is men who predominately resort to violence. As such, activist intervention should focus on the development of masculine identities and specific risk factors for men. At least in theory, masculinity is synonymous with privilege and power in Ghana. In reality, men's inability to fulfill traditional roles such as provisioning, can lead to stress, alcoholism, and abuse. A lack of employment and education may exacerbate feelings of ineptitude. Abuse often manifests as a way to regain control. Viable solutions to the problem of intimate partner violence will not be found or utilized without the help of progressive males. As such, socialization and the formation of masculine and feminine identities are a key site for intervention.

My study supports much of the research that's already been done. Intimate partner violence is prevalent in Ghana and the country is still lacking the funding, resources, and infrastructure to effectively combat it. With a government, and specifically a President, who does not prioritize the eradication of violence, and a slew of cultural arrangements that reinforce it, Ghana is facing an uphill battle. The National study conducted in 1999 by the Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Centre was enlightening and informative, and the resulting book, [The Architecture of Violence Against Women in Ghana](#) is an amazingly, in-depth look at factors that contribute to violence. The Centre and the authors of the essays in the book focused on a more quantitative approach, and although my interviews are qualitative, they align with the large-scale research. The interviews and their emergent themes provide anecdotal evidence to support that research. My

participants' voices are real and powerful. They have worked hard to promote equality and end violence against women in Ghana for eight, ten, sixteen, twenty plus years. The interviews are stories of their struggles and frustrations, but also of their victories, as well as statements of all the work they know they have left to do. Their voices registered with pain at times, frustration, anger, even weariness, but always with a foundation of fortitude and hope. My hope is that their voices will inspire others to support women's groups, help shift attitudes, and invigorate activism.

Personal Note

It was not until I was in Ghana conducting my research, (during the last interview I did no doubt), that I was made aware of the amazing book The Architecture for Violence Against Women in Ghana. I was equally overjoyed and disappointed when the book fell into my hands. On the one hand it is the product of years of hard work and commitment and is an invaluable resource to anyone working to combat intimate partner violence in Ghana. On the other hand, I chose to work in Ghana because I was unable to find literature whose goal was to dissect the changes that had occurred in Ghana since the passage of the DVA. Then, two days before I was to leave Ghana, research in tow, everything I had been working toward as a graduate student was handed to me in exchange for thirty cedis. "If I had unlimited resources and time," I thought to myself, "this is the book I would write."

How was I to proceed? I felt as though all of the work I had done in preparation for my trip to Ghana, as well as the research I had done while in Ghana was overshadowed by the extensive research that had taken place over the course of seven years for the book. Add to that the sensitivity of trying to situate myself within the research as a white, Western, middle class, college educated female, and I was at a loss.

My positionality situated me as an outsider looking in, and though I educated myself on Ghana and spent a total of almost 3 months there, I discovered that my Western perspective was still in my way. My reaction to the body of literature that I found before traveling to Ghana, led me to believe that perhaps work on this topic was not being done. Because I couldn't find research in journals or on the Internet, it must not exist. I fell into the trap I had been trying to avoid. I felt naïve and angry with myself for failing to suspend my own biases. However, the work I did in Ghana was eye opening and humbling. Men and women work everyday with steadfast determination and resiliency fighting an uphill battle because they care about equality for all of Ghana's citizens.

People and their cultures are always changing. Often the shifts are so nuanced that they are difficult to pinpoint and even more so to unravel. I believe that many researchers, who conduct interviews on the topic of violence against women, must at some point in the process think to themselves that they did not ask the "right" questions. Once I began identifying concepts and themes, I thought of many different directions I could have taken the interviews. Alas, while I was in

Ghana, immersed in the project, I found it difficult to maintain a bird's eye view. I was trying to situate myself in a new country with a new set of cultural rules, and I was concerned with the presentation of my project and of myself. I felt hesitant to take up too much of anyone's time or to ask more difficult, probing questions. Many of the participants seemed stressed and rushed for time, and I was also racing the clock. In hindsight, many of the interviews felt too formal for my taste. I would have enjoyed going out for coffee or the like, and believe that my interviews might have benefitted from a more relaxed environment. Were I to go back tomorrow, I would ask very different questions. However, I believe that scholars and activists learn from the process and become better researchers through it. The most important personal lessons I walked away with are these: just because you cannot always find them or see their work, does not mean that modern day abolitionists and equality fighters are not there, and just because you may stand on the shoulders of those abolitionist and equality fighter giants, does not mean that your voice and contributions lack significance.

A Vision for the Future

Once I left Ghana, I spent many hours thinking about bodies. What could I say about the effects of violence on African bodies? As a woman who studies gender and gender-based violence, I have often thought about the ways in which female bodies are turned into "things" or "objects" made separate from the woman who embodies them. Women's bodies have been made agents of social control and even sites of

conflict when, during warfare, systematic rape is used as a tactic against them. I have never questioned my desire to comment on women's bodies, but was made to think very critically about commenting on African women's bodies. I do understand the necessity of situating oneself in the socio-historical context of the work, as well as turning a discerning eye toward one's own biases. However, I would urge researchers who wish to explore fields outside of their own lived experience to do so. Do not feel discouraged if people tell you that you have no business researching a certain topic. Chances are you feel passionate about it, so put in the effort and set aside your biases as best you can. But remember that your voice and your lived experience are important and powerful too.

Activists and scholars wishing to undertake research on or educate people about gender-based violence in Ghana should focus on the development and reinforcement of gendered identities and on the overwhelming abuse that youths and children face. The intersection of masculine and feminine identity formation and interpersonal relationships between men and their wives/girlfriends and their children must be a primary site for intervention. Education and involvement are key. Volunteer with a local women's group. Ask questions and share your stories. Distribute training manuals to different organizations throughout your community. Help organize a protest or a community meeting to discuss gender-based violence. Practice effective self-care techniques. And recognize that you are not alone. Although you may feel discouraged at times, remember that there are millions of people in the world combating gender-based violence and fighting for equality.

Listening to the stories of the men and women I interviewed was inspiring. Some shared proud moments with their specific organizations, and others spoke of the encouragement they found in watching other men and women in their same field. Afua, a 10-year employee of TWN-Africa, said, "We're small, but we're trying to be loud in different ways." When Adwoa sees volunteers who come out to work with the Gender Center and who listen to victims' stories and offer them comfort, she says, "This is the kind of support that gives me a lot of hope." Akosua agrees. Women should never feel alone in their fight for equality, she says. "It is not about *their* fight. Survival should be *our* destiny."

Appendix A: Map of Ghana



Appendix B: Interview Guide

- How comfortable do you feel right now, knowing that you will be talking to me about intimate partner violence?
- What motivated you to participate in this study?
- May I ask your age?
- May I ask your occupation?
- Where were you born and raised?
- Have you noticed any change in the number of reported incidence of intimate partner violence since the passage of the DVA?
- Do you feel as though most women in the country know that the bill was passed?
- Have you seen instances where women have utilized the bill's safeguards for themselves and their children?
- What social services and resources do you feel are still lacking?
- Before the DVA was passed how did people in the community respond?
What did women do?
- What is the greatest obstacle that you feel must be overcome in order to drastically reduce or eradicate entirely intimate partner violence in Ghana?

- Tell me a story about something that worked. Or a story about a woman who was satisfied after her interactions with your organization or received some kind of solution.
- What has been your greatest triumph? Your most devastating defeat?
- How did you get involved in intimate partner violence work?
- Tell me any story that you feel will aid in my research.
- I've seen posters that talk about issues of domestic violence. Can you tell me anything about this campaign or these posters?
- Why, do you think, intimate partner violence is a problem in Ghana?
- Where is the organization's focus? Does it focus only on Accra or on areas surrounding Accra as well?
- How did you feel once you made the decision to seek help from an organization? How do you feel now?
- Do you have any children? Do you feel comfortable talking with them about intimate partner violence?
- Is there a question that I did not ask you that you feel would have been interesting or difficult?
- Was there a question that was difficult for you to answer during the interview?

Appendix C: Sample Letter

To Whom it May Concern:

My name is Jennifer Morris, and I am a graduate student in the Women's and Gender Studies program at the University of Texas at Austin. I was in Ghana over the summer working with homeless children in Accra, and I am here now doing research on intimate partner violence and the Domestic Violence Act of 2007 for my Master's thesis. I would really love the opportunity to interview several members from [organization] about the Domestic Violence Act. The interviews would probably take less than an hour.

I have worked with abused and neglected children in Austin and have been doing extensive research at my university. My goal is to ascertain how the availability of and accessibility to intimate partner violence services has changed since the passage of the DVA in 2007. I'll also be interviewing members from the Ark Foundation, DOVVSU, WISE, MOWAC, TWN-Africa, The Gender Center, and several other organizations working to combat intimate partner violence in Ghana. I hope that my research will perhaps shed some light on what is most lacking in the fight to attenuate the deleterious effects of intimate partner violence, so that advocates might be better able to implement the DVA's emancipatory qualities. I will compile my results and provide them as a resource to anyone who might use them.

I will be recording the interviews only so that I may transcribe them once I return to Texas. All of the information I collect will be used to write my final thesis so that I may graduate with my Master's degree. Every effort will be made to protect participants' confidentiality. Those steps include:

locked storage – all of the notes, tapes, and files of the interviews will be kept under physical and computer lock in my room in Ghana as well as in my home upon my return to the United States.

limited access – only my advisor and myself will see those notes, tapes, and files.

destruction of materials – all of the paper, audio tape, and computer files will be physically destroyed by January 15, 2011 at the very latest; the tapes will be destroyed entirely as soon as they have been transcribed.

pseudonyms – pseudonyms (fake names) will be used as the identifiers for participants, their cities, and their shelters on all the paper, audio tape, and computer files if participants wish.

tape use – the audio tape of the interviews will be listened to only so that it can be transcribed; no one will hear it other than my advisor and myself.

Please let me know if I could come and meet with you all. I look forward to hearing from you.

All the best,

Jennifer

Appendix D: Verbal Consent

The Domestic Violence Act: Ghana's Bright Future:

My name is Jennifer Morris. I am a student at the University of Texas in Austin, USA. I am doing a research study on intimate partner violence in Ghana. I am asking questions of people living and working in this area for my research study.

I would like to ask you some questions about intimate partner violence and the Domestic Violence Act that was passed in 2007. It will take about 30 to 60 minutes of your time. You don't have to answer any questions you do not want to answer—this is voluntary—and if you don't want to answer any questions you can stop our conversation at any time.

I will not be asking for your full name or keeping records of your name and address so that your answers cannot be linked with you or your participation in this study. In other words, your answers are confidential. There are no benefits or costs to you for answering my questions. Would you like to help me with my research study? Before we start, do you have any questions? Is this a place where you feel comfortable talking about intimate partner violence?

If you think of any other questions or want more information about my research project, I can be reached at or a message can be left at (512)567-6138 or largetalon@gmail.com. If you have questions about your rights, complaints, or concerns about this study, you can contact the Office of Research Support at 001 (512) 471-8871.

Appendix E: Code Book

1.) Lack of funding, resources and expertise nationwide.

Statement made by a coordinator at DOVVSU. There is simply not enough funding to create the positions necessary to handle all of the issues surrounding intimate partner violence. And even when the funding is there, often there is a lack of formal education or training for the positions. Shelters are desperately needed so that employees aren't rushing to quickly solve an issue because they are so backed up and have nowhere to send the women. Counselors are needed.

2.) Powerful women's groups working together within and outside of Ghana.

NGOs and government organizations in and outside of Ghana are working together to affect change.

3.) Education and sensitization are critical.

Critical for cultural attitudes to shift and for movement building.

4.) DVA as well as work done by other organizations seems to have had some impact even if not quantifiable.

A feeling expressed by several participants. There has been a psychic shift. Women are more accepted. More women know that they have rights and what those rights are. People are talking about gender in politics and in the economic sector. Women are asserting themselves in the public sphere.

5.) More interest in and conversation about gender and violence overall.

Out in the public sphere. DOVVSU is a household name. And DV is no longer just a family issue.

6.) Need for a coordinated sustainable infrastructure to respond quickly and effectively to abuse.

Ex. The one stop shops where everything is on-site. Counseling for adults and children. Doctors to perform examinations of abuse. Psychologists to deal with trauma. Legal counsel. Shelters. Most services are fragmented and understaffed. Women often have to run around to different offices to get help and many don't have the resources to do that, so they may just return home or to a work place.

7): More interest in gender and economic policy matters.

8.) Certain cultural practices and traditions can prevent education on and usage of the DVA.

Ghana is traditionally a very communal and family based society. It is common for families to deal with conflicts or problems internally rather than to seek outside help. Seeking outside help is looked down upon, and some people will prevent education on something like the DVA because it is in direct opposition to tradition/cultural practices. People also stand in the way of women owning land or being involved in politics or the economic sector.

9.) Women are often re-traumatized by the system.

Made to pay for their medical examinations, forced to meet with the perpetrator or told they have to go to 5 different places.

10.) Lack of research post the DVA to determine its effects.

Gender Center will not do another study any time soon, but said that MOWAC has been talking about a study. Difficult to tell whether incidents of violence increased after the act or if more people are just reporting. The numbers have been going up steadily, but it's hard to separate pre DVA from post DVA without more research.

11.) Need more data analysis to target gender issues.

There is a need for more specific data analysis surrounding issues of gender in Ghana, so that individuals and organizations will have more accurate information with which to raise issues and make decisions.

12.) Internalization of abuse has led some women to accept it and even expect it.

Over time, within a patriarchal, capitalist society, the internalization of norms of submission and abuse, lead to a belief that submission and abuse are normal parts of life. Women begin to believe that abuse and submission are their lot in life.

13.) Legal recourse is empowering and instills hope in victims.

It also helps to have the police handling affairs rather than some other organization because then the perpetrators are more likely to show up and deal with it. There is the threat of legal action.

14.) With a platform to address women's issues, the President says there are no resources and that it's not a priority.

15.) Best way to influence change is from the bottom up.

In another interview, the participant said the exact opposite. Change from top down is the way to go.

16.) Incidents of DV have been steadily increasing over time.

This was a comment made by the Director of DOVVSU and the executive director of WISE. It is not clear whether or not there are more incidents or whether more people are now reporting than before.

17.) Difficult to get the government to live up to its promises.

They often relegate women's issues to the background. See: the President's press conference.

18.) DV work is very demanding and you must be flexible.

You often have to sacrifice your sleep or weekends.

19.) Women shamed for reporting abuse.

Women are often made to feel guilty for reporting abuse because to many it is still seen as a private issue to be dealt with among the family. Shaming by family, neighbors, and police officers is common. Women are also sometimes made to provide money to go and get the perpetrator or to go to another office for medical services or counseling.

20.) Women capable of economic and political contribution.

21.) Women who have internalized abuse or sexism may prevent education on DV and the Act.

Women who fiercely believe that women belong in the domestic sphere and that women should be submissive to men, tried to prevent the passage of the DVA and the marital rape clause. They often tell other women to stay with abusive partners, deal with abuse themselves within the home, and not to talk about it or report it.

22.) Work on DV being done well before the DVA was proposed.

Some of the organizations I interviewed have been around for a long time and had been doing work on gender-based violence well before the DVA was proposed.

23.) Need for self-care is high for people doing this kind of work.

24.) Don't want gender to be an afterthought in decision-making process.

Often gender is left out of the economic and/or political conversation and then tacked on at the end. Discussions of gender need to be an integral part of decision-making processes in Ghana.

25.) Some people feel defeated but continue in this work because they know they can help *some* people.

What keeps them going is that one special person they helped or that one person who comes up to them on the street and says thank you.

26.) Too much red tape and too many gaps in the infrastructure.

27.) Ghana needs a political mind shift.

Statement made by a 10-year employee of TWN-Africa.

28.) Need to implement laws for gender based violence outside of domestic sphere.

Perhaps an amendment or maybe just stipulating in the purview during the implementation phase. But an amendment might be needed.

29.) Still difficult to get women to see themselves as economic actors.

30.) Women pushed out of economic and political sectors.

Even though there are women currently in politics and working and contributing to the economic sector, women still face discrimination within both sectors. Cultural norms still work to keep women in the domestic sphere.

31.) DV Management Board oversees women's groups and the implementation of the law.

Highest management board in terms of DV. The management board was written into the DVA and is responsible for effective implementation of the law. There is also money being donated and the DV management board is responsible for doling it out.

32.) Heightened advocacy around issues since the DVA equals more reporting.

33.) Need for juvenile justice program.

34.) National study confirmed that DV is prevalent and interventions are necessary.

35.) Police officers being sensitized.

Training manuals are now available via the Gender Center. Workshops being held.

36.) More progress being made now by women's groups than in the past.

37.) Cultural shift is happening but it's taking too long.

38.) Important for Minister of Women's and Children's Affairs to have a good relationship with orgs as well as Minister of Justice.

See: Previous Minister's clashes with different organizations.

39.) Ghana proud to be one of the few African countries to pass DV Act.

40.) Marital rape clause passed in an amendment.

It was a very contentious issue to include that clause or not. It led to a stalemate for a long time. But they eventually got the clause repealed in an amendment.

41.) No equivalent to CPS and no termination of parents' rights.

If anything they will take a child and place them with a relative. They don't want to take a child and disrupt his/her schooling, so they might try to find a close relative until the situation is resolved.

42.) Men now coming in to DOVVSU and Dept of Social Welfare to report.

Often there are issues surrounding the child's welfare or custody of a child that can lead to abuse. Men may be abusive or women may be abusing the child or the husband. Sometimes men are upset that the woman is not properly caring for the child. This was unheard of before.

43.) Police are not properly trained or sensitized to issues surrounding DV.

44.) Women can't own land and land reform is needed.

45.) Support from the families of victims is important.

See: the woman who killed her 5 children

46.) Although FGM is illegal, it is still sought after by some women for cultural reasons.

Female genital mutilation is illegal in Ghana, but some women sneak across the border to have it done because they feel pressure to live up to cultural standards. They feel they will not be the "right" kind of woman without having the procedure.

47.) Need for recognition that issues are related.

Good to stay topical and address issues that are current that may not be at the forefront of some people's minds. Ex. The financial crisis in the West was seen as a non-issue for many people in Ghana, but it actually affected Ghana's banks and institutions and development. Need to help the government and civil society see how things are interrelated.

48.) Educated women are more likely to know about the passage of the DVA.

It is less probable that women in rural areas will know about the DVA. It is an issue of dissemination and infrastructure.

49.) Need to do more to fight child labor.

50.) Some women in rural areas and some illiterate women do not know about the DVA.

Most of the elite women in Ghana know about the DVA and about their rights. Many women in rural areas, who are illiterate, have no idea that a law was passed, nor would they be able to utilize its safeguards because of a lack of infrastructure in the country.

51.) Caning is still legal and practiced in many schools.

They say some schools have banned it, but some still do it anyways. A huge factor is the Bible verse "spare the rod, spoil the child." Many believe it should be outlawed by the government.

52.) Two nationwide consultations done to get feedback on DVA bill before it was passed.

One was done by the coalition working to get the bill passed, and then once they presented their results to the Parliament, the government decided they wanted to

do their own study as well. The coalition study was met with overwhelming approval by the people, but the government study was not.

53.) Coalition consultations met with approval but government consultations not.

54.) Even if resources are available, many can't afford them.

They can't afford them or don't have the time to take off to attend counseling.

55.) Ghana as a gateway for human trafficking.

See: Chinese girls

56.) Often DOVVSU or Dept of Social Welfare will try to handle problems without the courts.

57.) People who claim there is no such thing as marital rape.

58.) Perpetrator counselors and counseling needed.

Especially within DOVVSU because people are more likely to listen to the police than they are to someone at WISE or the ARK Foundation.

59.) Neighbors reporting on behalf of neighbors now.

60.) Long-term counseling is a challenge.

Appendix F: LIST OF PARA-LITERATURE

- Folder from Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Center that contains Facts on Violence Against Women in Ghana which includes:
Pamphlets on Myths About Violence, Violence Against Women, and Rape and Sexual Assault. The folder also contained a booklet covering topics such as: profile of physical violence in Ghana, profile of psychological violence in Ghana, sexual violence, traditional practices as violence, economic forms of violence, reporting, reasons why women were physically or psychologically abused, why do women stay in abusive relationships, perpetrator profiling, what are your options, and the do's and don'ts of helping victims of abuse.
- 3 Sister WATCH Newsletters from the ARK Foundation. The newsletter's tagline is: Creating a Society in Which Men and Women are Truly Equal in all Spheres and Endeavors of Life. The newsletters cover topics such as: The Women's Law and Human Rights Institute, sexual harassment at work, warning signs of an abusive relationship, a call for stiffer FGM laws, 16 facts about women you probably did not know, a personality profile of Alice Walker, tips on dieting, mastering your goals, and effective work habits, inspiring quotes, spotlight organizations and books, and regional news related to abuse. Literature from the ARK Foundation also included a pamphlet for a 24 hour hotline/counseling service.

- 3 African Agenda newsletters from Third World Network-Africa. The newsletters are published 6 times a year and contain articles with headlines such as: “Women’s Responses to State Violence in the Niger Delta”, “Women Keep Zimbabwe’s Battered Economy Afloat,” “African Rights Commission Faces Sexual Orientation Test,” “Rwanda Takes Another Step to Empower Its Women,” and “Complicating the Vote for Women.” Literature from Third World Network-Africa also included a pamphlet on Mobilizing for Economic and Social Equity in and for Africa in the Global Order.
- Newsletter entitled “Akoben” (vigilance and readiness) from the Network for Women’s Rights in Ghana (NETRIGHT). The newsletter contains articles on the election of 2008, using methods to increase women’s representation, women on financing, setting an agenda for the Women’s Ministry, women in politics, the first female speaker in Ghana’s parliament, and women and HIV/AIDS. The literature from NETRIGHT also included a “Compilation of a Yearly Review on the Status of Women in Ghana from 2003-2008.” The booklet contains six chapters, one for each year, and looks at what each year has meant for women in Ghana both personally, politically, professionally, domestically, and economically. There was also a pamphlet about NETRIGHT entitled, “Mobilizing for Women’s Rights in Ghana.”

In the last census of 2000, the population of Ghana stood at 18,412,247 with women forming 51 per cent of the total population of Ghana. Women in Ghana, like their sisters in other African countries, have multifaceted roles both at home and at work. In spite of the important role played by the women of Ghana in the socio-economic sector, their contribution to the economy and social life have largely been ignored.

Under Ghana's constitution, both women and men have equal status under the law. Despite these constitutional and legal guarantees, women still play subservient roles to men. Under our customary systems, women are expected to give precedence to men in all things, with the men taking all decisions affecting the family.

This position of being the subservient partner has created a situation where Ghanaian women are equated to children. In addition, women are often considered to be the property of their fathers and husbands. This control by men over women has meant that many women have accepted the situation that allows men to "punish" them for alleged disobedience.

Violence is a threat to all women in our society. For too long it has been kept silent. Many believe that violence at home is a "family affair" and should be dealt with inside the home. Too often we turn our heads when we know that a woman is being abused. That silence is as dangerous as the abuse itself. By ignoring violence, we are putting every woman we know at risk. Violence against women affects every woman from the time they are infants until they are elderly. It affects our daughters. Our mothers, our sisters and our friends. Violence is a threat not only to women, but affects society as a whole.

This information package is to provide you with the details and facts about violence against women. Identifying the violence is the first step in ending it. The information enclosed is the result of a national study done by the Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Centre and its partners. One of our goals is to help bring an end to the violence against women in Ghana.

INTRODUCTION

PROFILE OF PHYSICAL VIOLENCE IN GHANA

PROFILE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE IN GHANA

SEXUAL VIOLENCE

TRADITIONAL PRACTICES AS VIOLENCE

ECONOMIC FORMS OF VIOLENCE

REPORTING

REASONS WHY WOMEN WERE PHYSICALLY OR PSYCHOLOGICALLY ABUSED

WHY DO WOMEN STAY IN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS?

PERPETRATOR PROFILING (DANGER SIGNS FOR MEN)

WHAT ARE YOUR OPTIONS?

THE DO'S AND DON'TS OF HELPING VICTIMS OF ABUSE

Myth about VIOLENCE

What is Violence Against Women (VAW)?

Violence and the threat of violence is a fear that is experienced by every woman – irrespective of age, skin colour, religion, economic or social status. It can happen anywhere, on the streets at the workplace, in the house.

It is different from other kinds of violence because it is targeted at women because of the inequality of position between men and women in society. It can take many forms, such as domestic violence, rape or sexual harassment. Violence against women is not only physical violence. It can be economic, psychological or traditional.

Some examples

- On the streets, snatch thieves target women.
- At the workplace, sexual harassment is often targeted at women.
- At home women can be battered and abused by their partner
- Incestuous rape occurs in the "Safe" of the home.
- Husbands can deny wives money to buy food.
- Girls can be circumcised as part of traditional customs.
- Husbands may threaten to stop paying children's school fees in order to hurt their wives.

What causes Violence against Women?

The problem of VAW lies in the inequality of status between men and women in society. Positions of power in politics, economics and religion are still dominated by men even though women make up more than half the population.

Our culture and most religions put women at an unequal position – their social status, quality of living and economic well-being are often dependent on or controlled by men.

Women's subordinate positions make them more vulnerable to violence. VAW is an expression of the power of men over women.

Who experiences violence?

Sadly, all women can experience violence. It happens to women from six months old to 93 years old. It happens to mentally ill and the disabled women. VAW happens irrespective of age, race, colour, religion, social or economic status. It has become an unfortunate factor in our society that all women can be targets of violence.

Who are the perpetrators?

They can be strangers, or a family member like her own husband, or even her father, brother, or uncle. It can be someone she knows intimately, like her boyfriend, or someone she trusts, like a friend or colleague.

Facts about Violence against Women. In the National study on Violence Against Women and Children carried out by the Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Centre in 1998, the following emerged:

- 1 in 3 women were experiencing physical violence (beating, slapping or other physical punishment) at the hands of current or previous partners.
- 2 in 5 women are harassed or coerced when they refuse their partner sex.
- 3 in 10 women are forced by their male partner to have sex sometimes.
- 1 in 10 women earnings taken away from them.
- 1 in 10 women forced to leave the house in which they were living, either with or without children.
- 1 in 4 women intentionally humiliated or shamed in front of others.
- 1 in 4 women had been abused by a male partner's refusing to provide money and foodstuffs.
- 27% of women have been sexually assaulted in their lifetime.
- For 2 in 10 women their first experience of sex was against their will.
- 4% of women had been threatened with demands for sex before being offered a job or having a favour done.
- 6% of women had been threatened by a school teacher or principal that schooling would suffer if they did not have sex.
- 2 in 4 male partner's used abusive words as a form of abuse.
- 9 in 10 women are known to their abuser.

Some Myths about Violence against Women

Myth: Alcohol is the real culprit in violence against women and children.

Alcohol and drugs can make abuse worse, but they do not cause abuse. Rather, it justifies the use of physical force by allowing the offender to abdicate responsibility for his behaviour. Some men become intoxicated in order to act out their violent wishes.

Myth: Men who beat their wives are mentally ill.

Violence against women is too widespread to be explained away by mental illness. Most men who assault their wives confine it to the privacy of their home. The abuse is often directed to particular parts of the body that will not visibly bruise or is covered; obvious restraint and forethought is necessary to accomplish this. Violent husbands are not likely to attack their bosses or any member of the public because they are frustrated. If the man was truly ill, he would lack the ability to be selective in his targets and controlled in his administration of abuse.

Myth: Women who are assaulted are usually asking for it.

No woman ever deserves to be beaten, regardless of the kind of person she is. Provocation is an excuse the offender uses to avoid responsibility for his own behaviour. Many people support his view by examining the victim's behaviour or personality for clues as to the cause of the abuse. Excuse-making perpetuates the use of violence as an acceptable method of problem-solving and leads the offender to believe he is justified in using force to get his own way.

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Background

The Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Centre (GSHRDC), established in 1995, is a non-profit, non-government organization committed to working for the promotion and protection of the human rights of women. Specifically, the Centre was founded with the mission of compiling information on women and human rights issues to support assertions about women's human rights issues and to help integrate women's concerns and perspectives into mainstream programmes, projects and policies addressing social and development issues.

Vision

Our vision is a society where women's rights are fully promoted and protected and they are able to participate in national development at all levels.

Mission

To create a knowledge base through research, advocacy and allied activities on issues of critical importance to women aimed at law and policy reform for the promotion and protection of women's human rights and their full development.

Our Core Values

- * Respect for the fundamental rights of all persons, including women and the recognition of the inalienability, indivisibility and interdependence of human rights

- * Promoting and enhancing opportunities for gender equality and empowerment;
- * Creating an enabling environment that supports and nurtures individual and collective development; and
- * Commitment to accurate knowledge transfer and information sharing.

PROGRAMME AREAS

Documentation

The GSHRDC maintains and coordinates a Documentation Centre of both national and international publication on gender and human rights, becoming an important source of materials, not only for NGOs, but also for researchers and students.

Research

Research on key issues is a core activity of the Centre, including an extensive nationwide research on Violence Against Women, and Domestic Violence in general. The centre's most current research is on "the role of gender norms and domestic violence in increasing women and girls' vulnerability to HIV/AIDS infection.

Publications and Material Development

The Centre publishes its research findings and advocacy materials/leaflets on domestic violence/violence against women. The centre also has a bi-annual newsletter which carries educative articles on women's rights issues. The centre also has in publication "A guide to the setting up of the Rural Response System",

a "Violence Manual" and a "Counseling Manual".

Training

The GSHRDC provides training in many areas such as human rights, gender, counseling, alternative dispute resolution, project planning and implementation, lobbying, advocacy, rights awareness, and leadership development for women.

Advocacy and Networking

As one of its core objectives, the GSHRDC supports the development of networks and coalitions for improved advocacy on women's rights issues. It is a member of Netright, Domestic Violence Coalition, Women's Manifesto Coalition etc.

PROJECTS

The Nkyinkyim Anti-Violence Project

The Nkyinkyim Project is a national anti-violence project which emerged from a nationwide research on violence against women, (VAW), which was undertaken in 1998. The project was conceptualized based on the findings of the research. The third phase of the project was the development and implementation of a Rural Response System (RRS), which provided support to victims of VAW, on a pilot basis in three communities, namely, Teogo in Bawku West District in the Upper East Region, Kwanfini in Atwima District in the Ashanti Region and Akawani in Kwabibrem District in the Eastern Region.

The project since 2005 has expanded into 15 new communities bringing the total to 18 communities. Our partners on this project are; the General Agricultural Worker's Union (GAWU), Centre for Development of People (CEDEP), Amasachina Self Help Association, Centre for Sustainable Development Initiatives (CENSUDI), Bawku East Women's Development Association (BEWDA).

The Safe Schools Counseling Project

The Safe Schools Counseling Project is a two-year pilot project funded by USAID and implemented by the Gender Centre. The project, which ends in June 2008, provides counselling services to abused children and sensitize adults in the intervention communities on issues of School Related Gender Based Violence, (SRGBV). It is being implemented in 30 communities in three districts namely; Ajumako Enyan Esiam, Assin North and Assin South districts in the Central Region.

Funders

Our major funder is Comic Relief through Womankind Worldwide, and others are USAID, Global Fund for Women.

GSHRDC
GENDER STUDIES AND HUMAN
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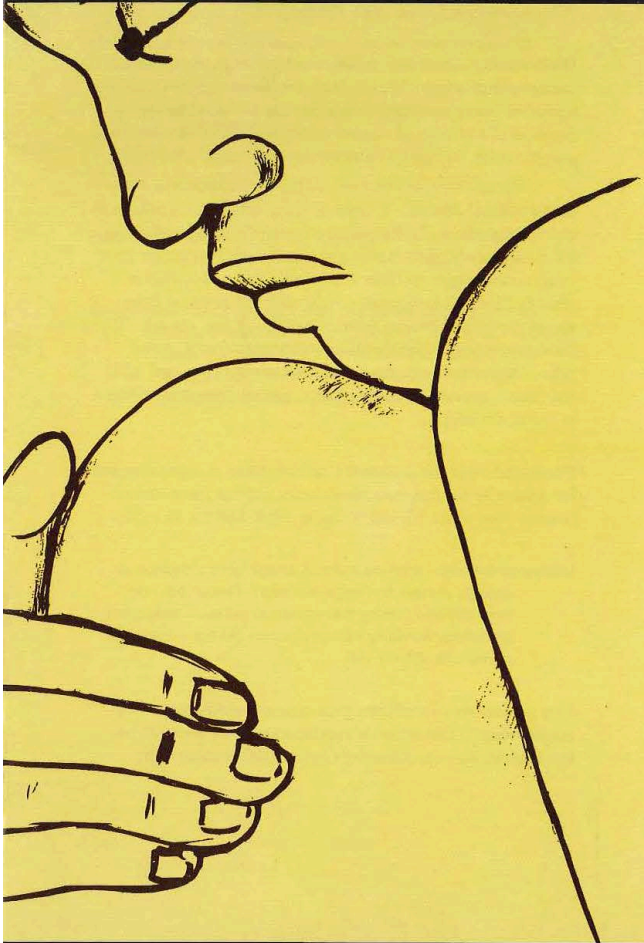
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VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN	VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN	VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN	VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN
<p>Break the Silence Domestic Violence Kills</p> <p>Domestic Violence is a threat to all women in our society. For too long it has been kept silent. Many believe that violence at home is a 'family affair'. There are many who think that domestic violence is something that should be dealt with inside the home. Too often we turn our heads when we know that a woman is being abused. That silence is as dangerous as the abuse itself. Domestic violence is not a family affair; it affects us all.</p> <p>What is Domestic Violence?</p> <p>Domestic Violence is physical, sexual, emotional, verbal, psychological and economic abuse. It is controlling behaviour against the woman, which can cause imminent harm to the safety, health or well being of her and her children.</p> <p>Violence is what happens when a partner takes control of a relationship and places unfair expectations on the other person. Most often, it is the man in the relationship who abuses the woman. There is no justification for violence against women and there is no reason why any woman should be abused within her own home.</p> <p>A man may take control of a relationship by giving orders; making decisions without consulting the partner; being possessive; keeping track of where she is, who she talks to and what she does; criticising her all the time; ruining her reputation by spreading rumours.</p> <p>Unfair expectations are imposed on the woman, expecting her to follow standards that he does not intend to follow. It can include thinking that she owes him sex; believing she must agree; thinking she should not contradict him in public; he can question her but she cannot question him; she must be interested in everything he is interested in, expecting her to be available all the time; when he is unhappy, she must make him feel better.</p> <p>In abusive relationships, the man will often not take the woman seriously. He will not listen; he sees girls or women as sex objects; he does not respect her opinions and thinks that girls or women are not as smart as boys or men; he thinks that women are too sensitive, overly emotional or irrational.</p> <p>It can happen between man and woman and parent and child.</p> <p>Domestic Violence includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hitting, shoving, pinching, pushing, beating, throwing things, punching; • Threatening to hurt someone; • Destroying a person's property, threatening their family; • Withholding money for food; • Forcing sex on another person; 	<p>Defining Violence</p> <p>Domestic Violence takes many forms. Rarely are these different forms of violence used in isolation. Many are used together. The following are profiles of the different forms of violence and their impact. The profiles are based on the findings of a national study on violence against women carried out by the GSHRDC in 1998.</p> <p>Physical Violence: this is the most familiar form of violence. It is a range of actions that are generally inflicted upon and/or of consequence to the body, resulting in varying degrees of damage. It is inflicting pain or causing harm to somebody with a hand, or knife, stick, belt, rope or any other object. It can include cruel punishment and physical torture, forced labour, beatings ranging from slapping and punching, to kicking and burning, assault with a weapon, and death.</p> <p>Psychological Violence: this is behaviour that is directed at an emotional level or has an emotional impact. Regardless of the intent or result of the behaviour, the abuse is used to force someone's compliance or obedience, and/or to control them. It can include threatening behaviour such as verbal threats, bullying and destruction of property, death threats, disrespect of women, threats that a woman will be removed from the house or that parents will stop paying a child's school fees, taking on girlfriends or second wives without consulting the woman, discrimination and favouritism between wives, biological and step-children, male partners refusing their wives sex, infantilization of women - values that relegate women to the background as inferior, refusing to eat a woman's food, confining women to specific spaces, such as the home, and isolating women by refusing to allow her to work, to visit family and/or friends.</p> <p>Economic Violence: this form of violence is often described as deprivation of essential needs. The most common experience with this violence is when men or male heads of households withhold resources as a form of punishment or refuse to provide essential materials such as money for food, school, and the running of the household. It can include refusing to allow her to work, forcing her to hand over her wages and become dependent on the man, or men spending scarce resources on drink and girlfriends rather than on the household needs.</p> <p>Harmful Traditional Practices: these are traditional practices that cause physical, emotional and sexual damage to women. Harmful Traditional Practices include female genital mutilation (circumcision), tribal markings, trokosi (the forced enslavement of young female virgins, and food taboos for women that dictate</p>	<p>what a woman should not eat at certain times or at all, bride price/dowry which encourage men to see women as property, punitive elements of widowhood rites such as food rationing, cold water bathing and lengthy abstentions from sex, forced marriage or child marriage in which the girls consent is not given for the marriage, adultery rites that publicly shame the women for committing adultery but do not touch the man, and cultural attitudes that indicate an inferior status for women and children.</p> <p>Sexual Violence: there are many forms of sexual violence which include rape or forced sexual intercourse in marriage and out of marriage, women and young girls being touched or being forced to touch someone against their will, defilement of young girls, sexual harassment, women being forced to comply to sexual demands due to a threat that they will not do well in school or may not be promoted, forced prostitution, forced homosexuality, forced pregnancy, women's lack of control over reproduction by their being denied family planning, sexual neglect, and men refusing to wear a condom to protect his wife when he has been sexually active elsewhere. Sexual violence takes place usually without the consent of the victim.</p> <p>The Cycle of Violence</p> <p>Rarely does violence happen only once (although it can). Most often it comes and goes, much like a cycle.</p> <p>Domestic Violence tends to follow three stages in a repeating cycle of violence:</p> <p>Tension Building Phase a time of stress and tension, but no violence. The victim may feel that she is walking on eggshells or waiting for the abuse to begin. It is important to remember that there is nothing the victim can do to prevent the violence from occurring.</p> <p>Violent Episode or Acute Battering Phase the violent partner explodes and attacks the victim verbally, emotionally and/or physically. This phase can last from a few minutes to several days. The time immediately after the explosion is commonly when the victim will look for help from friends, police and/or women's shelter.</p> <p>Reconciliation or 'Honeymoon' Phase the abuser is often very apologetic in this phase and seeks forgiveness from the victim. Gifts are given and promises are made. The victim wants to believe that the abuser's loving behaviour during this phase is proof that the violence will not continue.</p>	<p>Not all relationships will follow this exact pattern. Some relationships never go through the gifts and apologies phase, but from tension to violence and back again. As the cycle progresses, the honeymoon phase tends to shorten and the abuser may express less remorse. This is a dangerous cycle that often ends in serious injury or death. For a battered woman, it is often very difficult to recognise the pattern once it has started. It becomes difficult to break the cycle without outside intervention.</p> <p>Who Batters?</p> <p>Perpetrators come from all social and economic backgrounds, races and religions. Most often it is a husband or partner who commits this crime against women. Parents can be violent towards partners and children, but statistics show that the majority of victims in domestic violence cases are women (over 90%).</p> <p>There is no standard for identifying the perpetrator. They may or may not abuse alcohol or drugs. He may appear to the public as a warm and loving person and a law-abiding citizen. They represent all personalities, family backgrounds and professions. Often, he will refuse to accept that he is the person responsible for his behaviour. He will blame the victim, his job, but never himself. He may even believe that his abusive behaviour is justified.</p> <p>Impact of Domestic Violence on Women</p> <p>Women suffering from Domestic Violence will face a number of emotions. A woman caught in a web of cyclical violence often finds herself isolated from family and friends. Her shame and embarrassment over the beatings keep her at arms length from others. Her fears for her safety and the safety of her loved ones keep her quiet. The few friends or acquaintances in her life are unlikely to know about the reign of terror in her home. Even if she attempts to reach out, her partner often sabotages her efforts by controlling her activities and limiting any contacts outside of the relationship. He may deliberately alienate her family and friends by rude and obnoxious behaviour. Often, she does not work outside the home or is unlikely to be involved in social activities. This social isolation limits her opportunities that help her to understand her situation. Her loneliness then serves to increase her dependence on her partner, the very person who promotes the isolation. This is called the cycle of isolation. She is forced to accept his definition of her value as a person.</p>

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN	VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN	VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN	
<p>Domestic Violence has psychological, physical and economic effects.</p> <p>Psychological Effects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victims are traumatised • Low self-esteem, confidence, value • Emotional scars • Fear • Depression • Suicide • Revengeful thoughts • Bitterness • Mistrust • Anxiety <p>Physical/Medical Effects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Death • Deformity • Scars • Suicide • Sickness • Infections • Unwanted pregnancies • Infertility • Hypertension • Broken bones • Bruises • Bleeding <p>Economic Effects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absenteeism • Poor performance at work • Loss of jobs • Inability to work • Greater economic dependence and vulnerability • Poverty • Reduce the number of women in the labour force • Loss of property • Increase government expenditure 	<p>Who to talk to Domestic violence whether manifesting as physical or sexual violence is criminal in nature and should be reported to the police. Victims can also go to non-state agencies to talk about the violence, such as friends, family members, the man's family members, community and religious leaders. The important thing is that the victim finds someone to talk to about what is happening.</p> <p>Contacts</p> <p>Medical</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Trust Hospital: Dr. Susu Kwawukume Tel: 021 761974/7 → Korle Bu: Dr. Ama Kyerewa Edwin Tel: 021 662388 → Achimota Hospital: Dr. Dorahna Sakyl Tel: 021 405661 <p>LEGAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Francois & Associates: Ms. Georgette Francois/Ms Fiona Asafu Adjaye Tel: 021 227173/224530 → FIDA: Ms. Jene Quaye Tel: 021 225479 → CHRAJ: Ms. Christabel Dadzie Tel: 021 668839/667032 → Africa Legal Aid: Tel: 021 666147/660498 	<p>TEMPORARY SHELTER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ark Foundation: Angela Dwamena-Aboagye/ Lillian Quarcoo Tel: 021 405661 • Medical School, University of Ghana: Dr. Araba Seffa-Dede/ Mr. Nortey Dua Tel: 021 228688 Ext. 18 • W.I.S.E: Tel: 021 781002/3 <p>COUNSELLING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bawku Women's Development Association (BEWDA): Tel: 0743 22310 • WAJU: Accra Tel: 021 662438 Kumasi: 051 26341/35739 • SKILLS TRAINING • GVSSN: Wendy Boamah Tel: 021 781002/3 (GVSSN offers information on most the services listed so far and appropriate referrals to other service providers). <p>Produced by: Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Centre Address: P. O. Box 6192, Accra-North Tel: 021 760688, Tel/fax: 021 760687 email: gencent@gendercentre.org</p> <p>Printed by YAMENS PRESS LTD. (021) 223222</p> <p>Supported by WOMANKIND WORLDWIDE</p>	<p>VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN</p> <p>Domestic Violence</p>   <p>GENDER STUDIES AND HUMAN RIGHTS DOCUMENTATION CENTRE</p>

Rape and Sexual Assault



+ Myths about Rape

Rape and Sexual Assault

What is Rape?

Rape – a crime of violence using sex as a weapon. According to Ghana's Criminal Code, it is *carnal knowledge of or sexual intercourse with a female of 16 years and above without her consent*. Rape means the least degree of penetration. Penetration can be oral (in the mouth), anal or vaginal. Although Ghana Criminal Code is limited to vaginal, this must be changed through Domestic Violence Legislation. It can happen to both females and males. The vast majority of rape is inflicted on women by men. It is rape even if there is no physical force, no weapons, no cuts or bruises. Rape can occur between the same sex and opposite sexes.

Rape is a first degree felony and when a person is convicted of that offence, he shall be liable to imprisonment for a term of not less than five years and not more than twenty-five years. (Ghana Criminal Code, 1960, Section 97)

Defilement - According to Ghana's legal code, defilement is the natural or unnatural carnal knowledge of a child under the age of 16 years, with or without her consent. Defilement is the rape of a child (oral, vaginal and anal). This means that no person under the age of 16 years can give consent for sex.

Child Sexual Abuse - There are many different definitions of child sexual abuse. Defilement is a form of child sexual abuse. Most commonly, child sexual abuse takes place when an adult or someone bigger or older than a child involves a child in sexual activity. This includes a wide range of sexual activity- sexual touching (breasts, genitals, anus), oral sex, sexual intercourse, vaginal penetration with fingers, penis or any other object, child prostitution, child pornography, and child sex rings (where adults regularly involve a group of children in sexual activity).

The punishment for defilement on conviction is imprisonment for a term of not less than seven years and not more than twenty-five years. (Criminal Code, 1960, Section 101 (22).

Indecent Assault - involves a sexual assault where there is an attempt at rape, but no penetration. The assault may have involved forcing the woman to perform sexual acts (**touching fondling etc...**) that she did not want to do or that she did not like.

This is a less serious offence than rape and defilement. The punishment on conviction is imprisonment to a term of not less than six months (Criminal Code, 1960, Section 103)

Incest - a person of 16 years and over who has carnal knowledge with a person they are related to by blood or marriage i.e daughter /son, grand-daughter/son, sister/brother, mother or grand-mother/father. Most often an incestual relationship involves a male adult (father, uncle, adult brother) and a female child. Recently, there have been incestuous cases involving male children.

This is punishable on conviction to imprisonment for a term not less than three years and not more than twenty-five years (Criminal Code, 1960, Section 105)

Sexual assault – is any unwanted act of a sexual nature imposed by one person upon another. Sexual assault of any kind is a crime, even in a dating relationship.

Consent – Agreement that is given voluntarily and willingly, i.e. without threat or force.

Unnatural Carnal Knowledge - is sexual intercourse with a person in an unnatural manner (oral or anal sex) or with an animal. It is an offence to have unnatural carnal knowledge of a person above 16 years with or without the persons consent.

Carnal Knowledge - is sexual intercourse with a person.

Fondling – Unwanted sexual touching of certain parts of the body, such as the buttocks, breast and genital area.

Gang Rape - involves more than one person forcing another person to have sex. Most often gang rapes involves more than one male forcing a female to have sex. But gang rapes can occur between the same and opposite sex. Again, the rape can be vaginal, anal and/or oral.

What to do

If you have been raped, there are things you need to remember. The first thing you have to remember is that rape is not your fault. Some women blame themselves for what has happened to them. You need to know that the rapist is the one who is wrong, not you.

You are not alone....

When you are raped, you may feel very alone and even guilty. Rape is not your fault. Do not blame yourself. No woman asks to be raped. Rape is a violation against your will and your body.

Some other things you should consider:

- Go to a safe place as soon as possible.
- Do not wash. Even if you really feel like doing so.
- Do not throw away any clothes. Put them in a paper bag or wrap them in newspaper. Putting them in a plastic bag can destroy the evidence from the rapist.
- Write down or try to remember the name or other details about the attacker.
- Tell someone you trust. It will help you to have the support of a friend, family member, or a women's NGO.
- If you are physically hurt, go to a doctor or hospital as soon as possible.
- Report the rape to police. Reports can be made from the hospital if you are seriously injured.
- You should not drink any alcohol or take any medications before seeing a doctor. If you do, be sure to tell the doctor what you have taken.
- If you want to go to the hospital or clinic to be examined, you need to go to the Police Station to get a medical form to bring with you.
- The sooner you see a doctor, the more chance of finding strong proof like blood or semen on your body or on your clothes, from the man who attacked you. Bruises and cuts will stay on your body for a while, but semen, hair and blood can be lost.
- There is a risk of getting HIV/AIDS or another STD's such as herpes or gonorrhea, if your attacker was infected. You should get a test done immediately after the rape and again six months after the attack to find out if you have become infected.

What next? (Step by Step)

If you have injuries that are life threatening, you should go straight to the hospital. If not life threatening, you will need to first go to the police. At the police station you will need to get a medical form to bring with you to the hospital.

At the hospital, patients must have a medical card and pay to have the form signed by the medical doctor. Often, the fee to have the medical form signed can be paid later. It may be possible to see a doctor and have the exam even if you do not have the money.

After a medical assessment and any treatment at the hospital or clinic, you need to return to the police for further help and to follow up on your report. At this time you will need to present the medical form signed by the doctor. Reporting to the police is the same as laying a charge. Once you report it, the police will follow you up with investigations. In larger centres such as Accra or Kumasi, you can ask to file your report with a specialized unit called the Women and Juvenile Unit(WAJU). They are trained to deal with sensitive cases such as rape and sexual assault. You can ask if there is a WAJU Unit in your area/region.

Impacts of Rape on Victims

The impacts of rape or sexual assault can be both physical and mental. You need to be aware of the impacts and know how to take care of yourself after the attack.

Physical Impacts.

Pregnancy: It is possible that you can become pregnant by your attacker. You will then have to consider whether or not to terminate the pregnancy. In Ghana, abortion is illegal except under extenuating circumstances. If you decide that you want to terminate the pregnancy talk to your Doctor.

AIDS/HIV: Approximately 3% of the population in Ghana is infected with AIDS or HIV. It is possible that your attacker could be infected with HIV/AIDS. You must wait until six months after the attack to be tested for HIV/AIDS. Before that time, HIV/AIDS will not show up in a test.

Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD): It is also possible that your attacker was infected with an STD. You should have tests done by your doctor to see if you've been infected. If you later have any discomfort, itching or discharge from your vagina after the rape, go to a hospital or clinic to be checked for an infection. Diseases like herpes or genital warts can be extremely uncomfortable, but are treatable. Other diseases like syphilis or gonorrhoea can be very serious if not detected and treated early enough. They are treatable so you should go to a hospital or clinic if you are not feeling well after the rape. It is a good idea to have tests done for STDs, even if you are feeling healthy.

Some suggestions are:

Psychological

Every woman has a different reaction to a rape. There is no right or wrong way to feel after an attack. Many women feel guilt, shame, fear, anger or depression. No matter what you feel, remember that the rape is not your fault. Talk to a friend or family member. If you find that they are not able to help you, you should seek counselling. This will allow you to work through your feelings in order to feel healthy again.

Where can it happen?

Many people think that rape happens in "dangerous places". That rape happens when a woman is out alone at night. However, more than one half of all sexual assaults occur in private homes, with the majority of incidents being in the victim's home. Rape can happen in large cities, small towns, urban and rural areas - it can happen anywhere. Some examples of where rape and sexual assault can occur:

- Tro-tro stations
- Chop bars
- Dark alleys
- Night Clubs
- Private homes
- Bushes
- Taxis

This does not mean you have to be afraid everywhere you go, but you do have to be aware of your surroundings.

Be Aware

Whether at home or outside, you need to be aware of your surroundings. This helps ensure safety. Rape is not only committed by strangers in dark and unfamiliar places. Nine out of ten women in Ghana are known to the perpetrator. Often it can happen in the home. There are things that are beyond your control. Sometimes you can do everything right and still become a victim. Remember, that even if that happens, it is not your fault. By following a few simple suggestions, you can do to help protect yourself.

Attending a self-defence course can help you develop the right attitude, and some useful techniques to resist attack. You can also trust your gut instinct. If you are not comfortable with a situation, get out.

Remember that what works for one woman may not work for another. Some women "freeze" and are unable to do anything. Do not feel guilty if this should happen to you. There are no right or wrong reactions.

At home:

- Keep your doors and windows locked at all times, even if you are at home and during the day. Security gates can be added protection.
- Keep the outside of your house well lit at night.
- Try to have burglar bars on all your ground windows.
- At night, close curtains so that people cannot see in.
- If you can, leave a light on inside the house at night.
- Have a watchdog.
- Do not open your door before checking whether you know who is outside. If it is a stranger, ask for some form of identification.
- On returning home, always have your keys ready to open the door. If you think someone is watching you, don't go into your house. Go to a neighbour or try to get some help. Remember that you can use your keys, your bags or even a shoe as a weapon.
- If you have a telephone, call a friend.

Outside the home:

- Always try to walk with confidence as though you know where you are going. Be vigilant. Watch men who are near you or approaching you.
- Wear flat shoes that will allow you to run freely if you need to. It is a good idea to wear clothes that allow you to move freely.
- Avoid groups of men if you can.
- If you are in company or at a bar, watch who pours your drinks so that they don't add pills to make you weak or knock you out. Do not leave your drink unattended.
- Be aware of how much alcohol you can drink before it's too much. You are vulnerable when drugs or alcohol impairs your judgement.
- Don't accept a lift home from a stranger, even if he knows a friend of yours.
- If you can, walk to where you are going with friends rather than alone.

- If you think you are being followed, trust your instinct. Walk faster, change direction and, if necessary, go to the nearest house or shop for help.
- If you think you are in danger, scream as loudly as possible. Many attackers are frightened away by a loud noise. Sometimes yelling, "thief!" will attract attention. If you are desperate, you could break a window in order to draw attention to what is happening. It is a good idea to carry a whistle for such emergencies.
- When you are driving a car, make sure that all doors are locked.
- Park your car in well-lit areas.
- Never accept lifts from strangers. If a motorist stops to ask for directions, keep a distance.
- There are some things you can carry to protect yourself, like pepper, a mace spray, keys, or a whistle.

If you are attacked:

- Try to get away from your attacker.
- Try not to let your attacker take you to another place or into a car.
- Sometimes, if you talk to or reason with the attacker, it might make him change his mind.
- Tell the attacker that you are having a period, you are pregnant, have an STD or disease like AIDS. This might put him off.
- Try to shout, bite, kick, pull his hair and use other forms of attack. Be realistic about your own strength and your ability to defend yourself. Sometimes active resistance can lead to further anger and harm. Passive resistance may be advisable if your life is in danger.
- If you are able to fight back, aim for the sensitive parts of the attacker's body such as the eyes, penis and testicles.

Who Can Rape?

Anyone can be an offender. It could be a stranger, although it is far more likely to be an acquaintance, friend or relative. Over one half of all sexual assaults are committed by someone who is known to the woman.

Men who commit sexual assault are from every background—rich, poor, every racial and ethnic group, and every kind of profession. These men can be husband, partners, relatives, boyfriends, employers, co-workers, doctors, teachers or lawyers of the women assaulted.

Assaults by acquaintances often involve the use of "tricks," verbal pressure, threats or mild force (i.e. arm-twisting or pinning the victim down) during the assault.

Who is Raped?

A popular myth is that only young, beautiful, attractively dressed women are raped. However, the fact is that any woman can be a victim of rape or sexual assault regardless of appearance, age, size, race, or sexual class, including the elderly, children and disabled women. It doesn't happen to any certain type of woman.

Why Does Sexual Assault and Rape Happen?

Men and women have not yet achieved equality in our society. When a man feels that his feelings and desire are more important than the woman's, sexual assault can occur. By committing a sexual assault, the man imposes his wishes on the woman through force, pressure or other methods. His "right" to be satisfied is more important to him than her right to say no. Often, when a woman says no, many men don't listen. They think she means, "maybe" or "yes." Some men believe that women secretly "want" or "deserve" to be raped. This is not true. "No means" "no," whatever the situation.

Under the law, women have the right to say no to any form of sex or sexual touching, even in a marriage or dating relationship. It is a popular belief that sexual assaults occur because a man sees an attractive woman and cannot control himself. This is not true. Offenders generally have poor social relationships with women, a poor self-image and see women as sex objects without feelings. Rape is a crime of violence and hate with sex as a weapon, used to hurt and humiliate the victim. Sexual assault and rape are acts of authority and hostility, not of sexual desire.

Myths about Rape

Myth: *Men commit sex crime because they do not have enough sex.*

Men who commit sex crimes do not have any more "hormones" or sex drive than others. Often these men have sexual partners; the reasons for the crime are not solely for sex.

Myth: *All sexual abuse hurts physically.*

Some sexual abuse may be "gentle," and therefore not hurt physically. This does not mean it is not sexual abuse or rape. Often there is severe emotional and psychological damage. When a victim experiences pleasure, particularly in cases of incest, they may feel guilty. When sexual boundaries are violated within the family, there is confusion in the area of sexuality and other relationships.

Myth: *Rape is usually committed by a stranger.*

Most sexual assaults are committed by someone the victim knows. In Ghana, studies by the Gender centre have shown that over seventy per cent of victims know the person who sexually assaulted them. They are acquaintances, teachers, neighbours, someone they recognize, close friends or family.

Myth: *Rape is the victim's fault.*

Rape is not the victim's fault. An offender may say a victim asked for it because of how they looked or acted. Unfortunately, it is not only the offenders who believe this myth, but also much of the general public. Such statements as "she wasn't wearing much," "she was drinking," "she did agree to go out with him" and "well, everybody knows what kind of girl she is," indicates that the blame is being placed on the victim and not the offender. Very often victims feel as if the assault was their fault and that had they done something different it might not have happened. The self-blame victims go through can be very damaging and have long term effects on their life and relationships. Victims should be given support and reinforcement that they did nothing wrong and that it wasn't their fault. Even if the victim was doing something risky, she did not ask to be sexually assaulted.

Myth: *Sex is a man's right in marriage; he will look for it elsewhere if you deny him sex.*

Society has granted permission for men to see sex as their right in marriage. However, sex in marriage is a matter of mutual consent.

Myth: *A lot of children like to have sex with adults.*

Children like nurturing and affection from adults. This is not to be viewed as wanting to have sex with adults. Adults abuse children when they cross that line.

Myth: *If you love someone, you should be willing to have sex with them.*

Love does not equal sex. A person should not need to have sex to prove love.

Facts about Rape in Ghana

- **27% of women** have been sexually assaulted in their lifetime.
- **1 in 3 women** had been fondled or touched against their will.
- For **2 in 10** women their first experience of sex was against their will.
- **2 in 5 women** are harassed or coerced when they refuse their partners sex
- **3 in 10 women** are forced by their male partners to have sex.
- **7% of women** had been forced to touch a man's private parts.
- **6% of women** had been threatened by a school-teacher or principal that their schooling would suffer if they did not have sex.
- **4% of women** had been threatened with demands for sex before offered a job or having a favour done
- Studies indicates that women are most at risk of sexual violence, in all its forms between the ages of 10-18 years.

Where to go

If you are a survivor of rape or sexual assault you can contact the following individuals/offices below for help

MEDICAL

- *Trust Hospital:*
Dr. Susu Kwawukume
Tel: 021 761974-7
- *Korle Bu:*
Dr. Ama Kyerewa Edwin
Tel: 021 662388
- *Achomota Hospital:*
Dr. Dorisina Sakyi
Tel: 021 405661

LEGAL

- *Francios & Associates:*
Ms. Georgette Francios / Ms. Fiona Asafu-Adjaye
Tel: 021 227173/224330
- *FIDA:*
Ms. Jane Quaye
Tel: 021 225479
- *CHRAJ:*
Ms Christabel Dadzie
Tel: 021 668839 /667032
- *Africa Legal Aid:*
Tel: 021 666147/660498

TEMPORARY SHELTER

- *YWCA:*
Ms Esther Owusu /Ms. Eunice Osei
Tel: 021 221944/220567
- *The Ark Foundation:*
Tel: 021 511610
Fax: 021 511382

COUNSELLING

- *Medical School, University of Ghana:*
Dr. Araba Sefa –Dede/Mr. Nortery Dua
Tel: 021 228688 Ext. 18
- *W.I.S.E:*
Ms Violet Awotwi
Tel: 021 781002/3
- *The Ark Foundation*
Tel: 021 511610
Fax: 021 511382
- *WAJU:*
Ms. Esther Appiah
Tel: 021 662438
Kumasi: 051 26341/35739
- *CENSUDI*
Margaret Mary Issaka
Tel: 072 22249
Bolgatanga
- *Bawku Women's Development Association*
(BEWDA):
Tel: 0743 22310
Bawku

POLICE EMERGENCY

- *POLICE*
Tel: 027 5222288
- *WAJU:*
Ms. Esther Appiah, Rita Narh
Tel: 021 662438

SKILLS TRAINING

- *YWCA:*
Ms. Esther Owusu /Ms. Eunice Osei
Tel: 021 221944 /220567
- And
- *Dept of Social Welfare:*
Ms. Margaret Kutsoati
Tel: 021 – 684539
- *GVSSN*
Wendy Boamah
021-781002/3

(GVSSN offers information on most of the services listed so far and appropriate referrals to other services providers)

DO YOU NEED HELP?



24 HOUR HOTLINE COUNSELING SERVICE

THE ARK FOUNDATION, GHANA



- ✓ Have you been raped?
- ✓ Have you or your relation been defiled?
- ✓ Are you experiencing a case of domestic violence or spousal abuse?
- ✓ Are you having problems with custody and maintenance of your children?
- ✓ Do you need a temporary shelter for abused women and children?

If you are a woman or a child experiencing any of the above, then **THE ARK FOUNDATION, GHANA** can be of help to you.

THE ARK FOUNDATION, GHANA is an advocacy-based human rights NGO that seeks the protection and promotion of the human rights of women and children.

Through its Crises Response Centre (CRC) Programme, **THE ARK** offers services such as **counseling, legal counseling/support, medical and other referrals, subsistence support, capital support, temporary shelter/rehabilitation.**

The CRC focuses mainly on working with women and children of either sex.

CALL NOW!!! HOTLINE: 0243-777-773

Confidentiality is assured

THE ARK FOUNDATION, GHANA

Tel: 021-511610 Fax: 021-511382 Legal Centre: 021-247870
www.arkfoundationghana.org email: thearkgh@yahoo.co.uk

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Sister Watch

A newsletter of The Ark Foundation (Ghana)

Creating a society in which men and women are truly equal in all spheres and endeavours of life...

Volume 4 Number 38

"Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young. The greatest thing in life is to keep your mind young."

Henry Ford

Hello Friends,

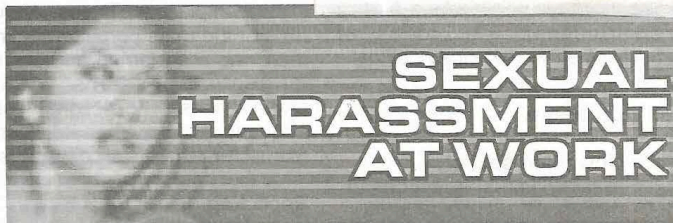
We're sure you are all doing great and have been waiting for this month's edition of Sister Watch. Well, here we are as usual with articles to get you thinking about how you can develop yourself and get others to join you in doing extraordinary things in life. I hope you will also let us know what you think about some of the interesting issues raised in this edition. Please do well to pass this newsletter on to others.

REMEMBER YOU ARE WHAT YOU READ!!!

Happy Reading!

Letters can be sent to:

THE EDITOR,
THE ARK FOUNDATION
P.O. BOX AT 1230,
ACHIMOTA MARKET,
ACCRA.



The African Women Lawyer's Association (AWLA) defines sexual harassment as any unwelcome conduct, comment, gesture or contact of a sexual nature, whether on a one-time basis or a series of incidents, that might cause offence, humiliation, awkwardness or embarrassment, or that might reasonably be conceived as placing a condition of a sexual nature on employment, opportunity for promotion, grades, etc. There was no specific reference to a particular demographic group in our definition.

Article 15(1) of the Constitution of Ghana (1992) provides that the dignity of the human being shall be inviolable. Sexual harassment is a demeaning practice that constitutes a violation of the dignity of the human being who is subjected to it.

It follows to conclude therefore, that sexual harassment is against the law.

Sexual Harassment not only fosters mistrust and disrespect in general societal relations between men and women, but it has also crept into

the workplace to disrupt the ideal business setting. It is a force that has upset relationships that should be purely business.

Sexual harassment in the workplace is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

- Submission to such conduct is made explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of the employment of an individual.
- Submission to, or rejection of, such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting the individual.
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with the work performance of an individual or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment.
- Sexual harassment involves privacy invasion, or access to the self beyond which it is desired. It is distinct from romantic relationships that are consensual.

• When a pilot study was taken by the AWLA in the first quarter of the year 2003, it became



Information on Resources / Services for Survivors of Gender Violence or Child Abuse

WHERE TO GO & WHO TO CALL

MEDICAL

Trust Hospital: Dr. Susu Kwawukume Tel: 021 761974-7

Korle Bu: Dr. Ama Kyerewaa Edwin Tel: 021 662388

Achimota Hospital: Dr. Dorsina Sakyi Tel: 021 405661

LEGAL:

Francois & Associates: Ms. Georgette Francois/Ms. Fiona

Asafu Adjaye Tel: 021 227173/224330

The Ark Foundation's Legal Centre for Women and Child Survivors:
Tel: 027 591024

FIDA: Ms. Ernestina Hagan/Gloria Ofori Boadu Tel: 021 225479

CHRAJ: Ms. Christabel Dadzie Tel: 021 668839/667032

AFRICA LEGAL AID: Tel: 021 666147/660498

TEMPORARY SHELTER:

YWCA: Ms. Esther Owusu/Ms. Eunice Osei

Tel: 021 221944/220567

The Ark: Angela Dwamena-Aboagye/Sandra Dela-Dem Fiamanya

Tel: 021 511610

COUNSELLING:

Medical School, University of Ghana:

Dr. Araba Sefa Dede/Mr. Nortey Dua Tel: 021 228688 Ext.18

W.J.S.E: Ms. Violet Awotwi Tel: 021 514707

The Ark: Sandra Dela-Dem Fiamanya. Tel: 021 -511610

WAJU: Ms. Esther Appiah Tel: 021 662438

Kumasi: 051 26341/357

POLICE EMERGENCY:

Police Tel: 027 5222288

WAJU: Ms. Esther Appiah, Rita Narh Tel: 662438

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE & CREDIT FACILITIES:

Women's World Banking: Ms. Mildred Caesar

Tel: 021 245177

International Needs:

Mr. Mensah Quaye/Ms. Patience Vormawor Tel: 021 236582

National Catholic Secretariat: Ms. Issabella Abban

Tel: 021 500491

*Medical services at regional hospitals as well.

SKILLS TRAINING:

YWCA: Ms. Esther Owusu/Ms. Eunice Osei

Tel: 021 221944/220567 **And**

Dept. of Social Welfare: Ms. Margaret Kutsoati

Tel: 021 684539

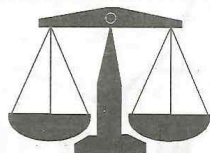
GVSSN: Pascaline Songsore

Tel: 021 514703

(Offers information on most of the services listed so far and appropriate referrals to other service providers)

Contributions are welcome from readers and interested organisations. Until "Sister Watch" comes your way again, have fun and keep up the fight.

**WOMEN
NEED JUSTICE**



Sister Watch is a newsletter of The Ark Foundation (Gh), a non-profit advocacy-based organization.

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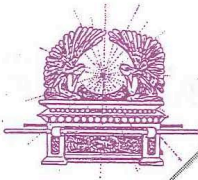
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THIS EDITION IS SUPPORTED BY CHARITIES AID FOUNDATION / WORLD BANK GRANTS

SISTER WATCH Newsletter



Sister WATCH

A Newsletter of The Ark Foundation (Ghana)

Creating a Society in which men and women are truly equal in all spheres and endeavours of life...

Volume 3 number 34

September, 2004

"Far
away there
in the sunshine
are my highest
aspirations. I may
not reach them, but I
can look up and see
their beauty, believe in
them, and try to
follow where they
lead."
-Louisa May
Alcott

Hi Everyone,

This edition is a second
special edition focusing
on The Ark's Women's
Law and Human
Rights Institute.

Have fun reading and
learning from what we
do raising the new
generation of women
leaders, managers,
advocates and activists.
Remember to pass the
newsletter on when you
are done reading.

Letters can be sent to:

The Editor,
The Ark Foundation,
P. O. Box RH 930,
Accra - Ghana.

We look forward to
hearing from you!

**HAPPY
READING!!!**

SPECIAL EDITION ON THE WOMEN'S LAW AND HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTE OF THE ARK FOUNDATION

Back in time...

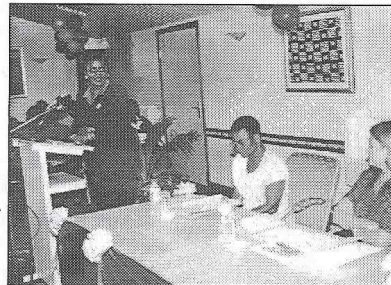
CENTRE FOR WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP AND EMPOWERMENT LAUNCHED!

On 22nd May, 2003, Ms. Gifty Afenyi Dadzie, the former President of Ghana Journalists Association, launched The Ark Foundation's Centre for Women's Leadership and Empowerment (CWLE). The launch was performed at the opening of the First Annual Young Women's Leadership Conference which was held under the auspices of the Women's Law and Human Rights Institute Program of The Ark Foundation.

The CWLE introduces to the Ghanaian public a concept that seeks to put together the two Programs of the Foundation under a central location, and provide to The Ark's beneficiary and network partners an empowering space to dialogue, learn, network and craft winning advocacy strategies for women, human rights and development.

Progress report...

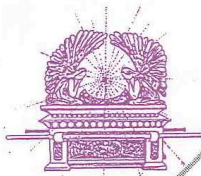
The Centre, temporarily located at Haatso in Accra is a beehive of activity - since May 2003 staff have had their hands full organizing women's leadership programs and two Conferences under the WLHRI; campaigns on sexual assault, gender violence and child abuse have come and



gone, and we are looking forward to 2004's 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence.

The Ark's Support to Survivors of Gender Violence and Child Abuse Program is also in full swing, providing sensitive care to survivors and building stronger links with community network partners in the Eastern region. Folks! We have been busy!

We are looking forward to a permanent Centre of Excellence, something to call our own. And praise the Almighty, work is beginning on this new phase of The Ark's work....



SisterWATCH

A Newsletter of The Ark Foundation (Ghana)

Creating a Society in which men and women are truly equal in all spheres and endeavours of life...
Volume 3 number 27

March, 2004

*"Everything's in the mind. That's where it all starts. Knowing what you want is the first step toward getting it."
--Mae West*

Hi everyone,

Welcome to this edition of Sister Watch. Included in this month's edition are excerpts from human rights watch report, words of inspiration, articles, managing one's life, news and information and other entertaining stuff to split your ribs and to ease your stress.

Enjoy yourself and let us hear from you on the information we provide to you.

Letters can be sent to:

The Editor,
The Ark
Foundation, P. O.
Box AH 930,
Achimota - Accra.

Write soon.

*Have a Pleasant
Reading!*

16 FACTS ABOUT WOMEN YOU PROBABLY DID NOT KNOW...

Even though you may be one yourself there are probably still things you don't know about women. Here are some female facts:

1 During the first six weeks of life, there is no difference between the male and female embryo.

2 The female genitals are considerably more complex than the male's.

3 The clitoris is as sensitive to stimulation as the penis.

4 The menstrual cycle corresponds to the 28-day cycle of the moon. Menses is the Latin word for months, hence the word.

5 A recent Canadian study has found that almost a quarter of women ovulate more than once every 28 days, which is why the rhythm method is ineffective as contraception for many couples.

6 When it comes to infertility, 30 percent of the time the problem lies with the woman, 30 percent of the time with the man, 30 percent

the result of a combination of things and 10 percent of the reasons remain unknown.

7 The nose of the average woman is smaller and flatter than that of the average man.

8 Women's hands and fingers are often more flexible than men's, and women are able to work with greater precision.

9 Until they reach puberty, there is little difference between boys and girls when it comes to speed and strength. But girls do tend to develop physical skills more quickly.

10 Osteoporosis is far more common in Caucasian women than in the women of other population groups.

11 Woman is the only creature that loses her fertility while she is alive. All other living things remain fertile until they die. This suggests older women were necessary to the species even when they could no longer have children.



12 The surface area of a woman's skin is between 1.5 and 2 square meters and weighs about 4kg.

13 A woman's skin varies in thickness from about half a millimetre on the genitals, to about 6 millimetres on the soles of the feet.

14 One person in every 20 has an extra rib, but this happens three times as often in men as in women. Is this perhaps where the story of Adam and the creation came from?

15 Nearly half the bones in a woman's body are in her hands and feet.

16 In developed countries, women have a longer life expectancy than men - on average between five and seven years.

Interesting, isn't it?

Internet Source

Sister Watch



Information on Resources / Services for Survivors of Gender Violence or Child Abuse

COUNSELLING:

❖ Medical School, University of Ghana:
Dr. Araba Sefa Dede/Mr. Nortey Dua
Tel: 021 228688 Ext.18

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❖ The Ark: Susan Apochie
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POLICE EMERGENCY:

❖ Police
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❖ WAJU: Ms. Esther Appiah, Rita Narh
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Kumasi: 051 26341/35739

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❖ Women's World Banking:
Ms. Mildred Caesar
Tel: 021 245177

International Needs:

Mr. Mensah Quaye/
Ms Patience Vormawor
Tel: 021 236582

National Catholic Secretariat:

Ms. Issabella Abban
Tel: 021 500491

* *Medical services at regional hospitals as well.*

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Tel: 021 684539

GVSSN: Pascaline Songsore

Tel: 021 781003

(GVSSN offers information on most of the services listed so far and appropriate referrals to other service providers)

Contributions are welcome from readers and interested organisations.
Until "Sister Watch" comes your way again, have fun and keep up the fight.



**WOMEN NEED
JUSTICE**

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THIS EDITION IS SUPPORTED BY MAMACASH OF NETHERLANDS



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social equity in and for Africa
in the global order***

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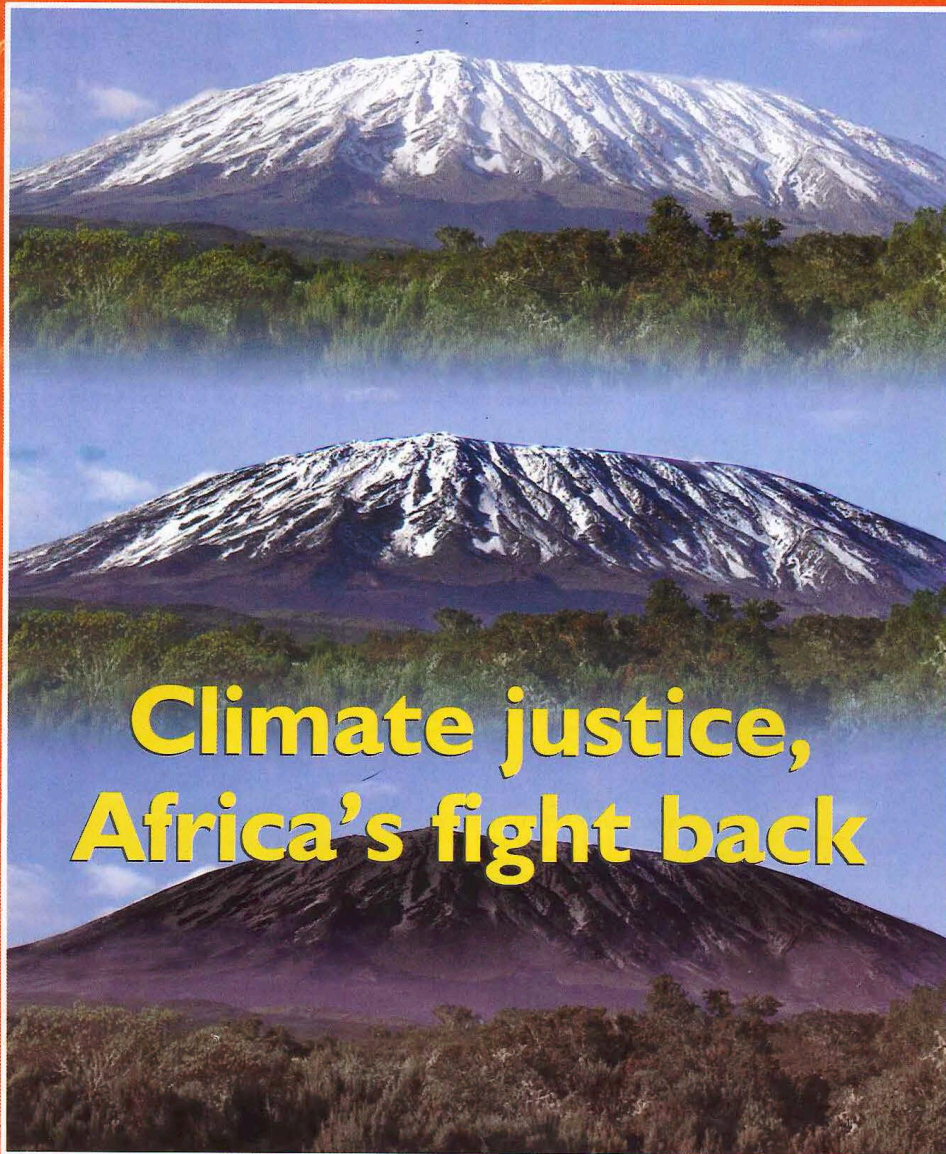
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African Agenda

ISSUE Vol. 12 No.4 2009

US\$5.00 GB£3.00 €5.00




**Climate justice,
Africa's fight back**

African Agenda

ISSUE Vol. 12 No.3 2009

US\$5.00 GB£3.00 €5.00



Africa and the Crisis: **BLOOM to GLOOM**

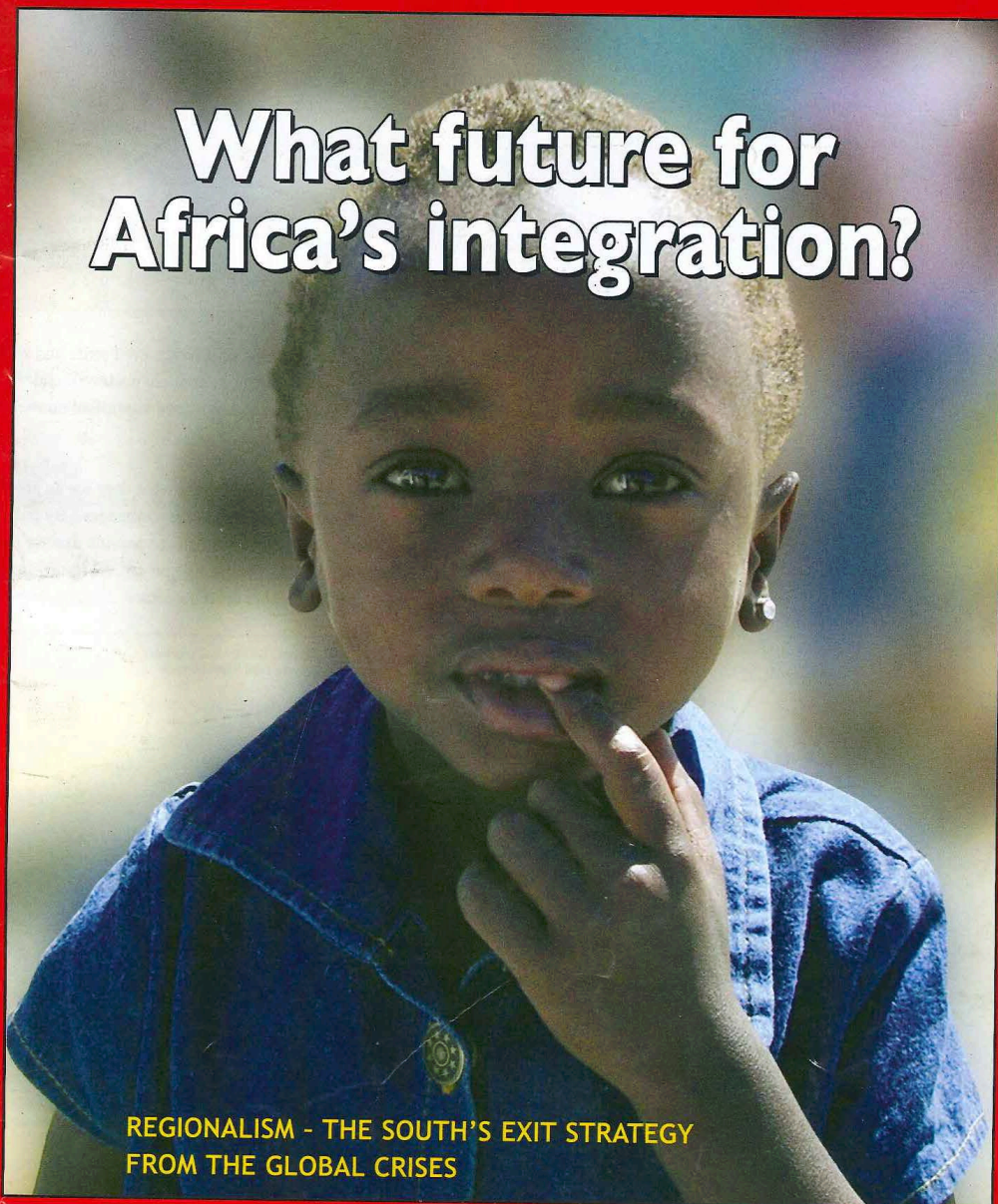
- GLOBAL FINANCIAL CRISIS AND GROWING DISCONTENT IN AFRICA
- ECOWAS' LATEST DIPLOMATIC HEADACHES

African Agenda

ISSUE Vol. 12 No. 2 2009

US\$5.00 GB£3.00 €5.00

What future for Africa's integration?



REGIONALISM - THE SOUTH'S EXIT STRATEGY
FROM THE GLOBAL CRISES



Akobben

ISSN 0855-5966

Newsletter of the Network for Women's Rights in Ghana (NETRIGHT)

Vol. 9, Issue 1 October 2009

REFLECTIONS ON ELECTION 2008

By Rose Mensah-Kutin

Ghana is currently hailed as one of the most successful democracies in Africa. From the colonial rule through to the independence period and the long period of successive military regimes, the country has been substantially stable, governed under the 1992 Constitution, with elections being successfully held every four years since then.

Even though elections constitute just one aspect of effective democratic governance, it is very critical, particularly in the context of Africa where several countries almost find it impossible to organize elections at all or when they do, end it up with acrimony, crises and full scale civil war. In such a volatile context, Ghana's experience is quite phenomenal given that in the year 2000 the government of the National



A woman casting her vote during the 2008 elections

Page 3

IN THIS ISSUE

Reflections on elections 2008
The Case for Quotas and
Proportional Representation

Tribute to Tajudeen Abdul Raheem

3 Coalitions Meet MOWAC

Profile of Honorable
Joyce Adeline Bamford-Addo

Report on CSW

NETRIGHT Corner

Using Proven Methods to increase Women's Representation

By Akosua K. Darkwah

Ghana's success at implementing and running a democratic state is a remarkable feat in the African context considering our own history of coup d'états and the stories of instability in many other parts of the continent, particularly the West African sub region. Since 1992, we have held five elections that have been judged as free and fair by both local and international media outlets.

While this is commendable, our record on women's inclusion in the system of democracy as participants in decision-making at both the local and national level of government is woefully inadequate. As shown in table 1, the numbers of women who are willing to stand for election at the District

Page 8



WHO WE ARE

Who we are:

NETRIGHT's membership consists of individual women and men and organisations such as:

1. ABANTU for Development
2. Third World Network Africa
3. Advocates for Gender Equity (AGE)
4. The Ark Foundation
5. Centre for Gender Studies and Advocacy (CEGENSA)
6. GAWU of GTUC
7. Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Centre
8. ISODEC
9. Mbaasem Foundation
10. Multi-disciplinary African Women's Health Network (MAWHN)
11. Ghana Trades Union Congress
12. WILDAF Ghana
13. Women in Broadcasting (WIB)
14. LAWA (Ghana) Alumnae Inc.
15. Centre for the Development of People (CEDEP)
16. African Women Lawyers Association (AWLA)
17. FIDA Ghana
18. Centre for Sustainable Development Initiative (CENSUDI)
19. Fataale Rural Foundation
20. Foundation for Female Photojournalists
21. Tenongtaaba Development Organisation
22. Ecumenical Association for Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (ECASARD)
23. Foundation for Grassroots Initiatives in Africa (GrassRoots Africa)
24. PASOAF Foundation
25. Women, Media and Change (WOMEC)
26. Widows and Orphans Ministry
27. Women's Manifesto Coalition
28. Domestic Violence Coalition
29. GNAT Ladies
30. Network of Women in Growth (NEWIG)
31. Federation of Muslim Women's Association in Ghana (FOMWAG)
32. AN-NISAA Foundation
33. AAWID
34. Women Initiative for Self Empowerment (WISE)
35. Christian Mothers' Association
36. Advocates and Trainers for Women's Welfare Advancement and Rights (ATWWAR)
37. International Needs
38. Pronet North
39. 6th March Women's Foundation
40. Women's Action Solidarity Aid (WASA)
41. Fracel Helping Hand Foundation
42. Health Services Workers' Union Women's Committee
43. Windows of Hope Foundation
44. Ghana Federation of Labour (GFL)
45. Centre for Rural Women Empowerment and Development (CERWED)
46. Thuhdeg Development Group
47. Society for Women and AIDS in Africa (SWAA Ghana)
48. Upper West Rural Women Association
49. Rozee Foundation
50. Grassroots Sisterhood Foundation
51. Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED)

MEMBERSHIP REGISTRATION

Membership is open to both organisations and individuals interested in promoting women's rights and gender equity in Ghana. Kindly request registration forms by email, postage or by phone from:

The Programme Officer
NETRIGHT
C/o Third World Network Africa
P.O. Box 19452, Accra North
Tel: 233 21 503669, 511189, 500419
Fax: 233 21 511188
Email: netright@twnafrica.org

Acknowledgements

NETRIGHT is grateful to the African Women's Development Fund (AWDF), Ghana Research and Advocacy Programme (G-RAP), Global GreenGrants, TWN Africa and the Global Fund for Women for supporting our programmes.

QualiType Ltd, Accra. Tel. (021) 325266-9 Fax: 325268,

What is NETRIGHT?

The Network for Women's Rights in Ghana (NETRIGHT) is a coalition of civil society organisations and individuals who have a clear interest in working together to bring a gender perspective in national processes and advocate policy change in ways that strengthens the work of individuals and organisations.

NETRIGHT aims to campaign for changes to achieve women's equal rights and to draw attention to violations of women's rights. It also aims to create space for debate, discussion and clearer articulation of different positions within the Ghana women's movement on women's rights issues, as well as other national issues. To ensure inclusiveness, NETRIGHT provides a national advocacy platform for civil society organisations around national and international processes and educates the public about gender equality and women's rights issues.

Why NETRIGHT?

NETRIGHT was founded in 1999 by a group of individuals and organisations interested in promoting women's rights in all national processes.

It was a response to a number of identified gaps in the approach of civil society organisations working in women's rights issues. Such gaps included the lack of a collective approach to working on national and regional processes; an under emphasis of the political and power relational issues in the gender and development work; the absence of space for debate and discussion to come to a clear understanding of women's positions on their rights and other national issues; and the inability to respond to critical issues partly due to lack of effective engagement with national institutions on women and policy making.

In response to these gaps the orientation of NETRIGHT is clearly one that emphasizes:

- A strong human rights perspective
- The political and power relational issues in the gender and development work
- The importance of advocacy and mobilisation and therefore aims for the broadest possible representation in our membership
- A secular approach to our work
- Non-partisanship

What are NETRIGHT's Objectives?

The objectives of NETRIGHT are as follows:

- To build a strong coalition of groups and individuals committed to women's rights issues in Ghana that will provide a base for more effective lobbying, advocating and campaigning on issues
- To work effectively with and support the work of the national machinery on women's issues
- To provide a forum for the sharing of ideas and information on issues, development and approaches to gender equality work and to reduce duplication and fragmentation of efforts on similar concerns
- To strengthen and support NGO presence and participation in gender equality and women's rights in Ghana
- To inject a human rights discourse to women's equality work in Ghana

What is NETRIGHT's Main focus of Work?

A cardinal principle of NETRIGHT is to provide support and not to duplicate or compete with its member organisations.

NETRIGHT does not organise activities similar to what its members are engaged in, unless added value can be brought to this. Rather it supports interventions of its members by publicising them and helping to identify resource persons.

At present NETRIGHT's focus of work is based on its three (3) core functions: movement building, economic justice and land rights.

Specifically, it focuses on issues of how people's livelihoods are affected by economic and development policies.

Programmes / Activities:

Since its establishment, NETRIGHT has provided leadership and analysis to advocacy on issues such as the weaknesses of the gender analysis and policies in Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS), women's land rights within the context of the Land Administration Project and women's participation in policy and political decision making. NETRIGHT coordinated Ghana's NGO report to Beijing+5 and Beijing+10 Review and the engagement of women's groups in the review processes.

Furthermore, NETRIGHT hosts the National Feminist Forum (NFF) in Ghana and the lead women's rights network for the Aid Effectiveness and Financing for Development (EfD) processes in Ghana.

The Akoben Newsletter is the official mouthpiece of the network.

NETRIGHT has strategically positioned itself to ensure that information sharing and public education are some of the ways it promotes its concerns to benefit women and their groups across all the ten regions of the country.

Through its "Outreach Programmes", NETRIGHT has worked with focal persons/organisations to generate discussion around the Aid Effectiveness and Financing for Development (EfD) process including the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (GPRSPs) and the Women's Manifesto. In addition, NETRIGHT has organised workshops, seminars, fora including special events which brought together participants from all the 10 regions of Ghana. Again, we have coordinated international events such as the Accra Women's Forum on Aid Effectiveness.

Movement Building

To strengthen its own capacity as a NETWORK and raise the knowledge base of staff, NETRIGHT has always been directed by the belief that information sharing and regular meetings among its members; and partnerships, collaboration and networking with other organisations working on similar issues is the most effective way to maximise resources and achieve results.

NETRIGHT has also emphasised the importance of participation in and contribution to meetings/conferences within and outside Ghana related to issues that border on the NETWORK's stated objectives, because through this, NETRIGHT can improve its own capacity, learn best practices from others, be an influential member within the Women's Movement and strengthen advocacy alliances in order to keep gender equality and women's issues on the national agenda.

Economic Justice

In the area of economic justice advocacy, NETRIGHT

specifically works on issues of how women's livelihoods are affected by economic policies and development programmes such as the GPRS and the Land Tenure Reforms. NETRIGHT has embarked on a three-year Economic Justice and Capacity Building Programme (EJCBP) to build the capacity of civil society organisations to effectively engage in and influence socio-economic policy debates from a gender perspective.

NETRIGHT also hosts Social Watch Ghana. Social Watch is an international NGO network monitoring poverty eradication and gender equality

As a gender and economic justice advocacy network, NETRIGHT has embarked on a Gender, Oil and Gas Project due to its interest in contributing to civil society engagement on oil and gas issues in the country from a gender perspective. As a network seeking to promote the right of women in economic and land policy making, NETRIGHT is interested in how the decision making processes around oil are evolving and taking the concerns of women into account and whether the decisions are prioritising national interest and citizens rights. NETRIGHT is equally interested in engaging with the process to ensure that oil as a vital energy service becomes easily accessible, reliable and affordable for women.

Governance and Structure

The structure of NETRIGHT is as follows:

- The Annual General Meeting (AGM)
- Steering Committee (SC)
- Convenorship
- The Host
- Secretariat
- Focal Points
- Membership

How does NETRIGHT pursue her Concerns?

NETRIGHT pursues her concerns through:

- Information Sharing
- Membership and Public Education
- Outreach Programmes
- Research and Publications
- Networking and Advocacy

How can I join NETRIGHT?

Membership is open to individuals, groups and Ghanaian organisations working independent of the state on women's rights and gender equality.

People working in foreign organisations or in organisations with political party affiliation may join in their individual capacities and not as representatives of their organisations.

For Further Information, please contact:



NETWORK FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN GHANA (NETRIGHT)

C/o Third World Network Africa
(TWN-Africa)

P. O. Box 19452, Accra-North
Tel: +233 21 500419, 503669, 511189

Fax: +233 21 511188

Email: netright@twnafrica.org

Location:

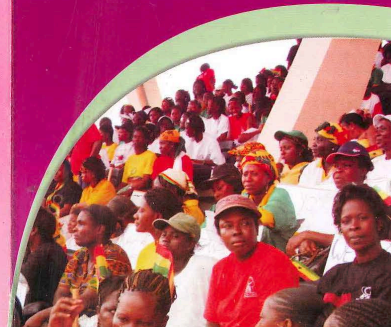
Third World Network Africa
(TWN-Africa)
9th Ollenu Street, East-Legon

QualiType Ltd, Accra, Tel. (021) 325268-9 Fax: 325268,

THE NETWORK FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN GHANA (NETRIGHT)



Mobilizing for WOMEN'S RIGHTS in Ghana

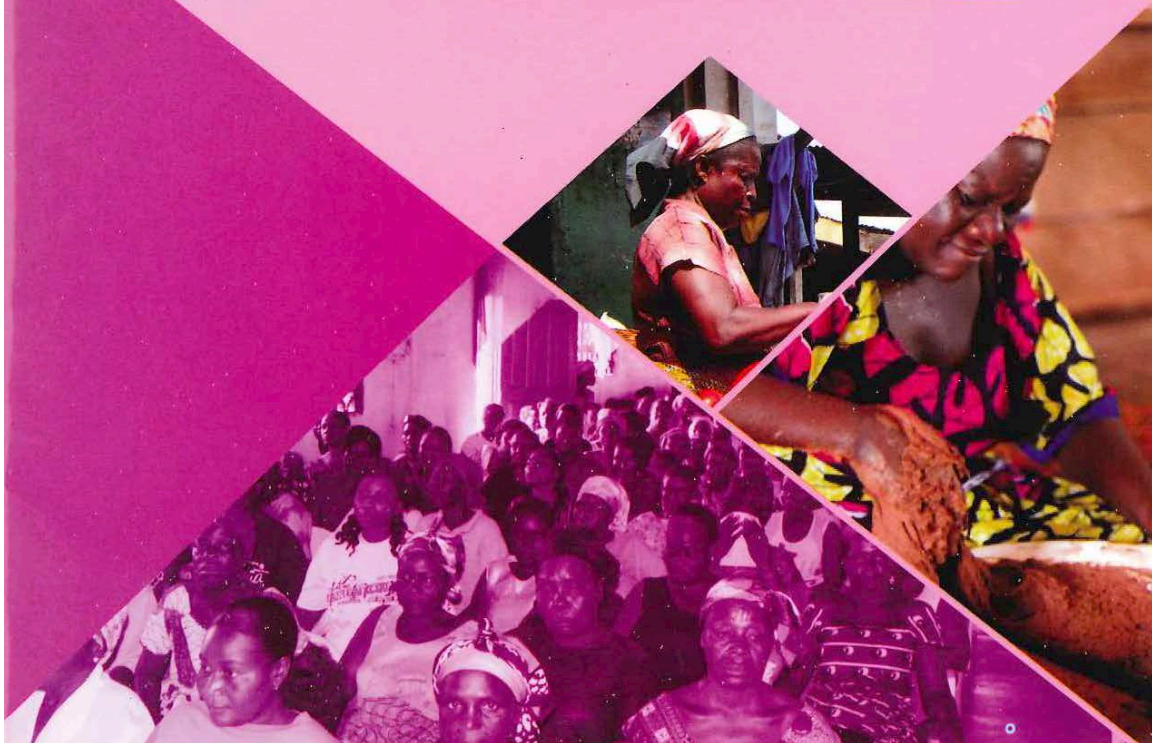




THE NETWORK FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN GHANA (NETRIGHT)

COMPILATION OF A YEARLY REVIEW ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

IN GHANA 2003-2008



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